

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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NEVER FORGOTTEN.

PART THE FIRST.

CHAPTER XXVIII. PRESENTED TO THE FERMOR FAMILY.

NEXT morning he was with the Manuels very early, and with a grave face demanded—though not in terms—a private interview with Violet. "My relations," he said, "are to be here to-morrow, and desire that you should be presented to them. As I need not impress on you how much depends on the first effect you produce on them, I may recommend you to be very careful how you behave."

When she heard this terrible news, Violet felt a shock. She had all along anticipated this dreadful ceremonial, and her little heart fluttered as if she had got a summons to the fashionable Council of Ten. If she had known of that fearful tribunal, she would, perhaps, have preferred it. She felt all "blankness;" her heart sank in, as though Fermor were the governor of the jail come to tell her that she must get ready for her scaffold on the next morning.

"Now," said Fermor, become suddenly like her spiritual adviser, "this is a more serious thing than you would perhaps imagine. Sit down, Violet." And he got her a chair, in which she placed herself, trembling, as if it were a dentist's. "You have not seen so much life," he went on, "and have been brought up differently. *They* have lived and had their being in the highest classes. Fashion is as the air they breathe. Naturally they are nice and critical, and have a different order of associations. They are very curious to see how you will behave, and how you will turn out; and the question is, how *will* you behave?"

Violet, who never thought how she would behave before any one in the world, and whose instinct in "acting" was her own simple heart, looked up wistfully at the dentist standing beside her, and said, sadly, "I don't—know."

"O," said he, gravely, "but we must *try* and know. I am sorry to see you don't appreciate how much depends on all this; you do not, indeed, Violet. I am really nervous about it myself; for there is a—a—and I would not say this to you, but for the gravity of the situation—a lightness, if I may call it, in your manner, a sort of rusticity, which I know would jar on

persons brought up as they have been. This is the rock I dread for you."

Poor Violet! whose voyaging had been a graceful pleasure-yacht in the sun and the smoothest of seas, to hear now of rocks! In sore affliction she did not know how to answer.

"Take time," said Fermor, gravely.

"O," she suggested, after a pause, and raising her eyes to him timorously, "I think if I were to be natural, you know—just myself——"

She stopped, for Fermor started back in alarm.

"Good gracious! no! Not for worlds! O, I see, my dear Violet, it is hard to get you to understand. You have not been trained to think, and it is scarcely your fault. So we must try and pull through as best we can." And having, as it were, extracted his tooth, with a hopeless air he prepared to go.

Seeing his resignation, and not knowing what to do, she came up to him helplessly. "O," she said, "if you would only tell me—teach me."

"O no," said Fermor, still resigned, "I have never found *that* to do. No, we must trust, as you say, to nature. Only I beg, I entreat, no spirits, no violent bursts of laughter. I know it seems bad to tell you this, but it is all for your own good."

Poor Violet! Bursts of laughter before *them*!

Fermor good naturedly made allowance, as for a child, and she saw this idea plainly in his face. He left her miserable; and then the idea of what had since passed out of her head—the "invalid girl"—came back. "She is not a child," she thought, "and can understand his instructions; and he respects her." Then with a weight of worldly trial pressing on her little brain, she went away to her room, and battened on her new-found miseries. This, we may say, on the whole, was the most gloomy day of her little life.

Restless towards evening, she asked her sister to come and take a walk. From her she received balm, and Gilead was poured abundantly into her wounds. They walked towards Brown's-terrace. Pauline almost laughed as she was told the particular woe of that sick girl. "If you torment yourself in this way, my poor child," she said, "you will fret yourself into a grave. They live next door to him, and a little civility is natural. Besides, he has told you that he has found them out to be low people, and has given them up."

"Yes," said Violet, half convinced, "I suppose so."

They were entering the terrace, when she drew Pauline back suddenly. "There he is," she said, hurriedly.

"Well," said Pauline, laughing, "we are not afraid to meet him?"

"No—not now—at least for a moment."

Fermor was coming out of his house, magnificent as a decorated Apollo Belvidere. He was smoothed, and brushed, and polished, and wore virgin gloves of the most delicate grey in the world; and the delicate grey fingers were closed delicately upon a packet of yellow-toned pamphlets—new works of the well-known Roger le Garçon school. In his button-hole he had a fresh flower. He passed out of his own gate, opened the next gate, went up the steps, and gave a dainty knock as if he were doing "a shake" upon the piano. Pauline, always ready with assuring doctrine, had not a word to say. Not in pale grey gloves, and with a flower at its button-hole, does the charitable Misericordia society visit its sick. Brother Fermor's "habit" was scarcely spiritual enough.

They had to think of other things. There was the Day of Execution fixed for the morrow, the awful presentation to the Queen-mother. Violet, agitated by her new troubles, scarcely slept that night, but tossed and rocked as if she were on the waves of a real ocean. The utter wreck of a night's rest is not much loss for a young girl; but, looking in the glass, which she did anxiously as soon as she had set foot upon land, she saw red rings round her eyes, and flushed spots upon her cheeks.

The great domed black boxes of "Lady Laura Fermor and suite," each with a coronet at the hasps, and wrapped carefully in a canvas paletot, had come down into Eastport, and had been got up-stairs into the genteel lodgings. Filtering the suite carefully, a residuum fell to the bottom, and resolved itself into one single maid, who was called Gunter. Gunter was delighted to get home again from what she called "Knees," but which was spelt "Nice," and which, as lying in a foreign land, and being in the hands of foreigners, she held, entailed a loss of caste in those who employed her. She professed many times her delight at finding herself home again in "a Christian country."

Fermor had been with them early on the morning of their arrival, and had been encircled by cold arms. He was a little nervous, though he did not acknowledge it to himself; for he was, at least, outnumbered. The girls welcomed him with the artificial blandishments of fashionable affection, and talked to him and put questions as if company were by, and he was Colonel Silvertop, Grenadier Guards. They felt that this was acting, and they felt, too, the absurdity of it, but could not help it. Their voices would fall into the ball-room cadence, and were, perhaps, foreign to the original key.

"We are dying to see her," they always called Violet *her*. "I am sure she is like Lady

Mantower's girl, you used to admire so much." This was Alicia Mary's speech.

"You must make up your minds, my dears, to be frights near her. Even as a boy, Charles, you were the most difficile person in taste. She shall go out with us in Town, all jewels and lace, and the richest dresses. I like those stately queen-like creatures."

"O mamma, and she can take us to court, and we shall walk behind her, every one asking who that magnificent woman is?"

With his mouth expressing sourness, and some impatience in his tone, Fermor broke in. "I don't understand," he said, "you run on so fast. As for being a stately creature, and that sort of thing, she is a very nice unassuming girl; and as for those fine dresses and drawing-rooms, we shall be too poor to be thinking of such things. I couldn't afford it."

"I hope not," said Lady Laura, gravely. "No plebeian saving and scraping, I hope. Making a handsome show is not so dear a thing after all; and that ten or fifteen thousand pounds, for we are disputing how much it was you told us——"

"Ten, mamma," said Blanche.

"What do you all mean?" said Fermor, turning very red. "Who was talking of ten or fifteen thousand pounds? I wasn't. If you mean Violet's fortune, she has next to nothing; and," he added, with an attempt at generous emotion, "she doesn't require it."

"Well, be it ten, or nine, or eleven, you must make a show on it if you wish to get on. It is very little, my dear Charles; for your father always said you would want plenty of money to keep you alive."

"But," said Fermor, bluntly, "we had better understand this once for all. I am not one of your mercenary people. From the first, I said I never would look out for money. In fact, it always seemed to me a—a sort of drawback, a kind of manufacturing thing. What I wanted was a person who would suit me exactly, and I at last succeeded in finding her. Violet," he added, looking round with a sort of pride, "will not have a sixpence of her own, literally not a sixpence."

The family looked from one to the other, with blankness mingled with contempt. Fermor saw their glances, and became aggressive.

"You," he said, "who naturally think the whole of life to be one long ball——"

"Hush!" said Lady Laura, calmly; "don't reproach *them*. You have not, I hope, let these people take you in? I am sure you are too sensible for that."

"Who says so?" said Fermor, sharply. "Perhaps that will be the next thing."

"Well," said Lady Laura, "you are old enough now, Charles, to know what is best for yourself. I tried to bring you up as well as I could to a certain age. The thing must go on now, and we must make the best of it. What time," added she, calmly, "are we to see your Miss Manuel?"

"O," said Fermor, constrainedly, "don't put yourself out. Any time to-morrow."

"You said to-day, I thought," said Lady Laura, coldly, and rising. "Now, my dears, we must get our things settled in this place. We have plenty to do. We shall be in all to-day, for I feel very tired."

Fermor went home chafing. "What a way they take things!" he said to himself. "Why should they be expecting this and that? I am sure I am old enough now to take my own course." But what really jarred was their resigned air of toleration; for he had expected banners, and bonfires, and acclamations, and general jubilee.

He arrived at Raglan-terrace in no very good humour. "Where is Violet?" he said; "please send her down, as we have no time to lose. Is she ready?"

Violet was up-stairs, but not ready. The final decorations were being pushed forward desperately. Nothing could be found, nothing was put on right or straight; agitated fingers tried to attach portions of dress to poor fluttering Violet's figure. The poor child had been bathing her face for hours, until it became all flustered and inflamed, and she had the wildness that comes from want of sleep. Every moment expresses came from impatient Fermor below. At last she came down.

He started back. "What *have* you been doing with your face? Good gracious, what is the matter?"

Violet came up to him timorously. "O, it is nothing," she said; "we have been in such a hurry, dear Charles. Let us go."

"But why hurry?" said he. "I thought that all this morning, *surely*—Let me see you in the light. Heavens! Is there no eau-de-Cologne in the house? This is dreadful!"

"Indeed, indeed, Charles, I tried all I could. I have been bathing—"

"Ah, that accounts for it," said he, calmly. "And you must not mind if I make another remark—but it is too serious an occasion to stand upon trifles. That bonnet—*Where's* your little lace bonnet?"

"O," said her sister, standing by her side like a workwoman over a piece of work newly brought home, "this is a new one, just got home expressly," and she telegraphed a special appeal to Fermor to forbear further criticism.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Come, let us go. We must pull through as well as we can."

They went alone, for Lady Laura had said, "Please let her come without any of her other people. I really am not equal to it to-day. Later, of course—but please don't ask me to-day."

In truth, poor Violet was in the most unfortunate plight for presentation that could be conceived. On this day she had determined to be splendid, and the result was that she looked a thousand times better in her every-day dress.

As they went in, Fermor said, solemnly, himself sadly out of humour, "Please recollect all my instructions. I assure you, though I dare say you don't see it in that light, you don't know how much depends upon the next few moments."

Thus encouraged, Violet entered. Primness and austerity distributed over three persons welcomed her. Lady Laura rose upon her gauntly, and wound her thin cartilages about her. The "girls," with a set smile and faces cold as china, waited their turn.

"Sit down, pray do," said Lady Laura, looking curiously into her face. "I am so glad to know you, I am indeed." The others sat about and looked at her as curiously, taking her dress as their department. In utter confusion, and with Fermor's eye steadily on her, Violet could only murmur and murmur a little stupidly, when Lady Laura got out some fashionable platitudes and gave them to her, and then paused, waiting to hear how they would be acknowledged—Violet could only say she was "so kind," and "so—" an encomium that reached no greater maturity. She heard Fermor change his place in his chair impatiently, and her small forces fell into complete disorder.

Alicia Mary was busy with that unlucky bonnet, and Violet felt it. The conversation languished terribly.

"We must come to know you a little better," said Lady Laura; "if you have any spare moments, we shall always be delighted to see you. In time, you will have, of course, more confidence in me. Alicia, you will make out Mrs. Manuel's address; we shall be delighted to leave cards and make her acquaintance."

Alicia Mary and Blanche and Laura gave her a cold accolade, and said they supposed they should meet her during the season in Town, which they also supposed she found "delightful."

Violet, in a tone that seemed to deprecate any violence, said she didn't know. She was longing to be gone. Fermor abruptly stood up. He was angry, and saw that it had been unsatisfactory; yet, curiously enough, he was not so much angry with Violet as with his relations. "I don't want their patronising airs. I can do in spite of them." And as he walked away he relieved Violet's mind unspeakably, by telling her that she had done fairly, very fairly indeed. He fumed against them all the way home. But the breeze was not able to carry him further than that day.

CHAPTER XXIX. SIR HOPKINS EXAMINES THE GROUND.

ON the next morning, excited by a sort of curiosity, he went to see his family again, and said, with an air of unconcern, "Well, how did you find her?" Lady Laura, with an affectation of ingenuity, sent out her daughters on various pretexts. "I did not like," she said, confidentially, "to speak of it before them. Now, tell me what time are you thinking of for the marriage. We shall, of course, try and meet your views in every possible way."

"O yes," said Fermor, "quite so. But you were satisfied on the whole?"

He saw that Lady Laura was kindly trying to avoid giving her opinion. "Don't be afraid," he said; "tell me candidly. I am not a boy now, you know."

"What is the use, now," she said. "*They* were more disappointed than *I* am. I am an old woman now. Seriously, my dear child, as you do ask me, what was over your eyes? I declare I thought I should have dropped when she came in. At first I was sure there was a mistake."

"But," said he, "don't you think her pretty? I know here she is considered the belle of the place."

"*Here*," said she, with a half smile. "O, that, of course. After your description and all, I really felt a chill at my heart. No manners, no style of any kind, not able to speak, and as for dress, my dear Charles, I lay it on you to speak seriously to her, for really it is not creditable."

How this criticism, which was in the tone of maternal condolence, affected Captain Fermor, may be conceived. He thought of it a good deal afterwards, and the remark about dress appeared to him specially just. Lady Laura seemed anxious to change the subject, so as not to give him pain. Sir Hopkins Pocock, she told him, would arrive in a day or so. "Seriously," she said, "you must lay your mind to making way with him. He is wonderfully inclined towards you, and said the other day you had the making of a diplomatist in you. He is to be a governor in a month or so, and I think could be got to take you out with him. He will have splendid appointments in his gift."

Fermor's face lightened. "I always thought," he said, tranquilly, "you should have put me in the diplomatic line. I should have done very well as an attaché. If I *have* a taste, it is for negotiation. I should be very glad indeed to go with Pocock."

He was, in truth, getting tired of arms, and its dull round, which presented no opening for a man of abilities.

"I will speak to him about it," said Lady Laura.

Sir Hopkins arrived the next day, plenipotentiary, as it were, accredited to a new country. He was seen perking down the street with an air of smirking surprise, as who should say, "Really now, this is very forward civilisation; quite surprising, 'pon my word." If he went into a shop, he seemed to go as an embassy to that shop, and prepared to negotiate a little for the article he wanted, as if he were dealing with the Waipiti tribe. At every turn something—really now—quite took him by surprise. He entered the principal bookseller's shop of the place, and negotiated out of him the leading persons then residing there. The principal bookseller had an inside room where two or three newspapers drifted about, and taking down Sir Hopkins's name with Lady Laura's, became impressed suddenly with respect.

"We are very full indeed now, sir," he said. "Colonel Gouter was in here this morning, and said he never recollected such a season. The bishop came only yesterday."

Sir Hopkins was surprised. "No, really? You don't tell me so? Now, is that the Bishop—of—er—?"

"Yes, sir. Doctor Bridles. We have got

his lordship's Charge, which has made such a sensation. Got down six copies last week, and only one left."

Sir Hopkins was smilingly amazed. And so this was the Charge, really now? That *was* curious. Well, and who else, now?

"We never were so full. There were the Miss Campbells, and the officers, and Major Carter, who gave the little parties."

"Carter! Carter!" said Sir Hopkins. "What! Not an elderly man, with light clean face, and greyish whiskers? No. I should say not?"

"Why yes, sir," said the leading bookseller, a little mystified by this way of putting the thing. "Why, that *is* very like him. It must be the same. He has been in the best society. A great friend of Captain Fermor's, sir."

"O! That is very nice indeed. Come now. A great friend," said Sir Hopkins, setting his head on one side, and resting his hands on the rail of a chair, as if it were his perch, and about to drink.

"O yes. In fact, sir, they *say* that it was at his house that Captain Fermor's marriage came about. Is it not interesting?"

Then Sir Hopkins, having bought half a quire of note-paper, and not having subscribed to the lonely lee coast where the wrecked newspapers were drifting about, went his way pleasantly. This was what he called getting the lie of the ground.

Fermor thought a good deal over what Lady Laura had hinted. It diverted him, too, from other unpleasant reflections. "Really," he said to himself, "I begin to think Violet is only a toy—a very pretty toy—and she seems scarcely to think life can be a business at all." But he was pleased with the notion of the diplomatic opening. "The very thing for me," he said. "He is most likely of the old-fashioned school, and I will go out with him as secretary nominally—in reality as adviser and minister."

Major Carter, he felt, had a sort of little bill against him, and he thought he would settle it by a dinner at the mess. "No man shall say I am in his books," Captain Fermor added, sternly; and Major Carter came to dinner that very day.

Mess dinners repeat themselves; hundreds of impressions can be taken from the one mould. The mess dinner, the mess plate, the mess waiters, waiting as if on parade, the mess diners, and, above all, the mess itself, are all according to a "sealed pattern" kept at the War Office, and turn up in every corner of the empire, as undistinguishable as one regimental button from another. Major Carter, as crisp and short as thin Scotch cake, bathed pleasantly in these scarlet waters. He paddled conversationally among them, adapted himself to the "young fellows," and was pronounced, with serious military gravity, to be a man of uncommon knowledge. Wise Folly, busy with its pipe, shook its head with profundity at Wise Folly in the other lounging chair, and uttered thickly that Carter was a man that had read a good deal. A stranger is always welcome; for they had gone round and round over the dried-up

patch of grass they called their "mind," until they knew every corner of it by heart. Their wells, in which there was such brackish talk as horses, uniforms, my setter pup, and jolly cigars, had long been pumped dry. Heads turned eagerly to drink up the clear brook of Carter talk. And yet he was insinuating and deferential, and with skilful tact suffered Fermor to lead.

After dinner there came the little ante-room, the playground, where the youths could disport with tobacco and strong drinks. A few got out the card-table, and applied themselves painfully to the serious game of whist. Major Carter shook his head sadly as he was asked to take a hand. "No, no," he said. "What I know of whist was bought a little expensively. A very pretty corner of Carterstown had to pay for bad play. After that night I gave up. Ask General Munro (then Colonel Munro—he was there the whole night) if I did not bear it pretty well." There being now a promiscuous distribution of cigars, Major Carter giving in on one point, said, good humouredly, "Come, I tell you what, I will take a cigar. Thanks." When the cigars were lit all round, and the room seemed glowing like a coal country at night, Major Carter got very pleasant, and began to unpack some of the little worldly wares he had gathered up in his journey through life. He set before them ghostly dinner-parties, ghostly balls, little domestic farces, in which Sandwich, Lord Yokel's brother, who was humorously called by his friends Lobster Sandwich, from the colour of his face, figured. General—then Colonel—Munro also had part in these recollections. More interesting, however, was it when Major Carter brought upon the scene a certain Maltese lady, whom he had met in garrison, "really one of the finest creatures in the Italian way" he ever encountered in the whole course of his life. "For myself," continued Major Carter, "I am not very much in *that* line; and men tell me such and such women are handsome, and of course I take their word for it. But really, when I saw this girl coming down the Strada Reale, literally fighting up the pathway, I confess I did feel ever so little curious about her."

The youths settled themselves to listen earnestly—for the least, the youngest not eighteen, may speak judiciously on this subject—when a mess waiter entered with a card in his hand, and said to Fermor, "That gentleman wishes to see you."

"Who can want me at this time? 'Sir Hopkins Pocock!' O!" the captain added, aloud, and rose to go out. He therefore did not see the curious effect of this name on his friend. Major Carter gave a scared look round from one to the other, and half rose too.

"Well," said Young Brett, breathless, "what did she do then?"

"Why then—" Major Carter said, abstractedly: "I must go now. Had no idea—so late."

A tumult of protest. "O, hang it. Confound it! Tell us about the woman."

"Must, indeed," said Major Carter, looking uneasily at the door. "Letters, you know. Good night—good night."

Meanwhile, Fermor was greeted warmly by his relation. "Just been up at your lodgings. Followed you down here. Don't know that I should know you, though."

"You must come in, my dear sir," said Fermor, with warmth; "we are just sitting after dinner. I asked a friend, Major Carter."

"Carter—Major Carter. Is he here?"

"O yes," said Fermor. "A sharp clever man of the world."

"Am sure he is the same—met him at Monaco. And a friend of yours. Come, I will go in and sit down for a few minutes."

As they entered, they brushed by the major, who was hurrying out, with his hat half way raised, as it were to catch a train.

"Good gracious! where are you going?" said Fermor, catching him by the arm.

"I *must* go," said the major, in a low whisper, still bent upon catching his train. "Please let me—business." Curiously, too, he spoke with his face to the wall, and turned away from Fermor.

"Major Carter, Major Carter!" said the diplomatist, with undiplomatic heartiness, "we have met before. You recollect *me*—Pocock? So glad. So very glad." And the diplomatic head was jerked on one side, and the diplomatic hand held out.

Major Carter slowly took a sort of under look at him, much as a dog does suspicious of his master, and instantly changing into the former crisp Major Carter that was sitting telling of the Maltese lady, became delighted to welcome an old acquaintance met with at Monaco.

"Sir Hopkins Pocock," said Fermor, introducing him to the company, "Major Dobbs, Mr. Slack, Captain Showers."

The hospitality of a cigar was promptly offered, and several open cases were proffered. Sir Hopkins chose one carefully, and smiled on them all round in return. His talk flowed on steadily in its thin stream; he never was at a loss, but to Major Carter he was specially attentive; appealing to him, and listening to him when he had appealed, almost with reverence. "Stay long at Monaco after I left? We had a very pleasant time of it. Recollect old Grimani from Naples, when he tore up my Times? They said he had lost fifty thousand francs that night."

And Major Carter, who had not seemed to recollect him well at first, and whose imaginary train had long since started, now became as an old friend of the liveliest memory, and a very delightful and genial old friend.

Fermor was pleased. "I always knew," he said sagely, next day, "that Carter was of the proper set; I can always tell by the ring of the metal." He was pleased, too, with his new relation. "Just the sort of man I required," he said; and presently had drawn him out of the crowd, now beginning to bet upon the whist party, and was talking to him gravely.

"They told me, sir," he said, "of your promotion. I am very glad of it. It requires peculiar gifts to govern. If you were thinking—as they told me you were—of taking with you any man of a peculiar turn that way, as secretary, or that sort of thing, I confess I should be very glad to go. You can understand that a man, who feels himself made for better things, and with ambition, must find himself rather thrown away in this sort of thing;" and he glanced round the room.

"O, of course," said the diplomatist; "quite so. And so you find this place dull? It seems to me pleasant enough. Do they ever give a ball or a dinner, eh?"

"O, I suppose so," said Fermor, carelessly. "I don't know, really. I am the worst person in the world to apply to. Of course, if you have chosen any one already, that is a different thing. But I *think* I could be of use; in fact, I am sure of it. Better, perhaps, than any one else."

"Ah, quite so," said the other; "no doubt. And the men here, how do you find them, now? Pleasant, I should say, for mere daily use—like roast leg of mutton, not a refined dish, but we have to come back to it."

"But *have* you made up your mind, sir," said Fermor, keeping to his point, "if I might ask directly?"

"Do you know," said Sir Hopkins, turning round on him, "you remind me of the old chief who was our stiffest card in the Waipiti. All our diplomatic forms were thrown away on him. My dear Charles, we will talk of this to-morrow."

Fermor, fretting at this cool reception of his proposals, which he always liked to be as promptly received as they were offered, said, ironically, "You have to make their acquaintance as yet, sir."

"No, no," said the diplomatist, smiling. "I have read a good many more men than I have books. For instance, that sunburnt man opposite, who made that comic remark about the halter of a horse."

Fermor smiled with compassion. "He never gets out of a circle much larger than a halter," he said. "Showers is his name. He is our professional jester!"

"Showers? Showers? I knew a Colonel Showers who commanded out in the islands, and headed the attack on the Pah."

"My uncle, sir," said Showers; "he was out there many years."

"Good gracious!" said the diplomatist, drawing his chair over to him, "how curious, how wonderful! He was my great friend, often dined with me at Government House. How is he? Heard from him?"

The diplomatist was so delighted at this discovery, that he addicted himself to Showers for the rest of the night. Showers, elated by the proud distinction, grew, as it were, rampant in his ardour, and threw out on all sides his Feccine jests, as they would be called in the old Roman History, being reckless enough, even, to level a shaft or two at the Fermor

Jove. But the face of the Fermor Jove wore an expression of deep pain and disgust, as he saw this strange preference. Later, something like this thought passed through his mind: "That the destinies of thousands of our fellow-creatures should be committed to a man who was so ignorant in reading the human mind! Surprising blindness! It made him sad."

Late that night they set out to walk home together. Major Carter and Fermor, with the diplomatist in the middle. At Fermor's gate they said good night, and Fermor went in. But he heard Sir Hopkins say in his cheeriest diapaason, "My dear Carter, give me your arm! Which way do *you* go? I want to have a talk with you over old times."

OLD, NEW, AND NO MUSIC.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER II. AN ENGLISH FESTIVAL.

A RETROSPECT of what England has done without—what has been effected here in cultivation and enjoyment of music during thirty years past, offered as a companion sketch to a late glance at Germany—makes up a record as odd and as full of contradictions as can well be imagined. If in one or two provinces of the art we have made, as shall be shown, a progress which places us at the head of European nations, in others we have obstinately stood still—or, what is even less hopeful, have gone round and round in a narrow vicious circle, till all clearness of discernment has been lost.

To begin with our short-comings. The collection of these, at once depressing yet droll, which the story of so-called national opera during the last thirty years must register, would be large enough to fill three volumes post octavo. Thirty years ago, it might have been fancied that we were at the end of a transition period. We had just buried Arne's *Artaxerxes*, with its *Fly soft Ideas, fly, and In Infancy, and Water parted from the Sea, and The Soldier Tired*, and the wonderfully appropriate and sensible quartet, *Mild as the Moonbeams*, poked in by Braham.—That was England's one classical opera which kept the stage;—and in which Miss Paton, the last of the Mandanes, was by patriotic faith held to be quite as great a singer as Catalani. We had done too, and seemingly for ever, with the ballad operas of *Linley, and Shield, and Dibdin, and Arnold, and Hook, and Kelly, and Mazzinghi, and Reeve*—spoken dramas full of pretty artless melodies, the like of which are not to-day to be procured for love or money, into the midst of which, every now and then, some pirated Italian bravura or concerted piece by *Galuppi, or Piccini, or Cimarosa, or Paisiello*, figured, with a coherence little short of sublimity. Comical, indeed, were those domestic operas, with their benevolent farmer-fathers, and their rustic heroines who ranged the fields (as Boyce's duet from *Solomon* hath it) in satin shoes, and who, when weary of gleaning, thought nothing of calling for a harp into the middle of a harvest-

field, in order that Rosetta might, from her own milking-stool, also obligingly brought thither by a familiar in a smock-frock, accompany herself in O no we never mention Her!—Comical was the roaring nationality of our naval and military operas, by which their manufacturers, nevertheless, realised large gains. And yet, in these works, there was a real applicability to the untutored taste of the English people, a certain life not to be altogether despised. And, in one matter of some consequence, our fathers were better off than ourselves. The words of the songs were more frequently written by shrewd dramatists and skilled versifiers—had more distinct colour in them than it has been since thought necessary to try for. The nonsense and namby-pamby of the worst among them, could be exceeded by specimens which have been produced since the Great Exhibition year of grace, 1851. The best remain without an equivalent.

Something of a quality more musically substantial than the above characteristic productions, was promised by the playfellow of Mozart, Storace; who, though not averse (as was the fashion of the time) to laying hands on the operas of the continental composers with whom he had been conversant, had received a training more according to European form and order than any of the pretty melodists mentioned, and who might, peradventure, have founded English opera, had not his career been cut short at an early period.—That greater English composer who succeeded him, and supplied our stage, during a period when it was rich in singers, charming enough to have led, not followed, the public—Henry Bishop—exercised an influence on national opera, fatal in proportion to the amount of his genius, and the quality of his mistakes and compliances.—With greater energy of character, and a finer respect for his art, the composer of the music to the *Miller* and his *Men*, and of the *Shakespeare songs*—one who had at his command such enchantresses as a *Stephens*, and a *Tree*, and such a tenor as *Braham* in his prime, might have made a deep print in England's musical annals—and left behind him permanent and lasting works—not merely beautiful fragments and indications hastily patched together. He had the good fortune, too, of having at his elbow a neat playwright, and a pleasing lyrist, in *Mr. Planché*. But he permitted every good chance to pass unimproved—every opportunity of gaining fresh and firm ground for dramatic music, to slip away under his feet. He respected neither his contemporaries nor himself. With power of appreciating and of equalling the foreign composers, whose brilliant and pathetic creations were unknown to the majority of the English (the Italian opera being still something like an exclusive luxury in this country), he deliberately allowed himself to garble, to arrange, to omit, to interpolate, in presenting their works, under pretext of naturalising them. To comply with the ignorance of unmusical managers, Bishop clipped, pruned, and patched the operas of his betters, even such men

as *Mozart* and *Rossini*;—and in his own creations showed himself too willing to wink at the harp in the corn-field,—at any nonsense, whatever its violence to probability, however so greatly at variance with dramatic character, provided the ballad pleased the gallery, and brought gold to the shop-counter. He had his reward in being jostled out of the English theatre by an inferior set of men, who knew a foreign trick or two more than he, perhaps, but “bettered his instruction” in the licences they permitted themselves, albeit pretending to a far higher musical completeness than was the order of his time.

Thirty years ago, however, for better, for worse, the taste for drama in Music—as distinguished from the play larded with ballads and glees—had fairly got hold of our public; and though we had still such melodists as *Horn* (whose *Deep, deep Sea*, and *Through the Wood*, sung by *Malibran*, are things to remember) and *Alexander Lee*, they were no longer sufficient for a musical stage, on which *Der Freischütz* and *Masaniello* and *Robert* had been produced, and had succeeded despite of the meddlers and manglers. We English were to have regular operas of our own making, which were to be as good as any *Sonnambula* or *Semiramide*. But our singers and our music-sellers would have their ballads still, and these stuck in becoming places—no matter what the suspense, no matter what the despair of the scene. And our composers did not shrink from laying hands on the wildest French drama done into ungrammatical prose cut into lengths, or on the busiest French ballet, demanding the mimic power of an *Elssler* to carry it through. There is no need to draw out a catalogue of the productions thus poured out during one manager's reign after another, which no episodic flashes of talent and invention could save. Written on a false principle, without a feeling for style—feebly absurd in language, and affording the most adroit of actors no chance of expressing passion or illustrating a story—neither French, German, Italian, or British—it was impossible they should last. They have not lasted accordingly; and at the time present, when a new campaign is beginning, and the old chime about “native talent” is sounded in our ears, as if it was rung for the first time to-day, real English opera is still as much a thing to seek, as it was in the more innocent times of the harp in the corn-field.

On the other hand, in the matter of execution—the advance made during the past thirty years has been great and wholesome. Though we have had no such charmers as the ballad warblers of the first quarter of the century, who won their laurels so easily, though we have had only one distinguished operatic actress (in the last of the *Kembles*), correctness in preparation has become the rule; and all that subordinate material which is indispensable as basis, has immensely improved in quality. A favourite ballad-singer would to-day be ashamed to boast (as I have heard done) that to learn correctly the words or the concerted music, or “the business”

of a new piece for the first night, was needless; so that his song was "safe." Our orchestra and chorus, again, have been worked up to an efficiency of which the Arnes, and Shields, and Dibbins, and Bishop—when he was writing Mahmoud, and the Slave, and Cortez, and the Fall of Java, and Clari, and his poor Aladdin, by way of challenge to Weber's Oberon—never dreamed. We may see, by-and-by, how this has come to pass.

England's progress in respect to instrumental music during the last thirty years is not less singular, inconsistent, and worth studying. Gain there has been, but not a tithe of what might have been expected. In one important section we have to admit retrogression. We have no longer a central instrumental concert on a level with those which are to be found in Paris and in Germany. Our Philharmonic Society,—which was in advance of its time in the days when it could comfort the heart of a Beethoven, by commissions which that unhappy man of genius ceased to receive in his own country, having there passed into temporary neglect and disfavour—when it could honour itself by bringing into immediate light the perfect promise of Mendelssohn—has, owing to mismanagement, favouritism, and the "mutual admiration system," carried to its highest development by well-meaning mediocrity, fallen back in the ranks. Its day of liberal counsels is over: its once skilful execution has become slovenly and expressionless. Its significance, in short, is gone; and nothing in the metropolis has taken its place. For enterprise, liberality, and research, for intelligence and spirit in performance, the lover of the best orchestral concert must now go to Manchester, where, thanks to the presiding influence of one spirited and thoroughly accomplished artist unhampered by the forcible feebleness of committee deliberations, the entertainment offered to the best and wisest connoisseurship is, of its class, unique in this island.

Thirty years ago, such love of instrumental chamber music as existed in England made little outward visible sign. It was stronger, however, than some might have dreamed. Our amateurs, among the middle classes especially—few, comparatively, as were their opportunities for instruction—form a company, whose curiosity, prescience, and honest enthusiasm have never had justice done them by those who have glanced at the subject: and for a simple reason. John Bull does not take to proficiency on any instrument kindly. Considering how adroit he can be with his hands and eyes, as a shot, as a whip, it seems, at first sight, strange that the neatness and readiness requisite for the management of strings or pipe, should, with him, "range at so low a figure." The patience of the German, the dash of the Frenchman, the instinct of the Italian, are not approached by him when the technical details of execution have to be mastered. But he must be cited as second to none in appreciation. It would be no bad story to tell, how from the recesses of

our shires to which communication was difficult—how from the hideously dull and prosaic streets of our manufacturing towns, an honest desire to enjoy and to enlarge the circle of their enjoyments, urged to those foreign cities, where instrumental music was then at its prime, men inexpert in foreign languages, and to whom the novelties of travel did not then, as to-day, come easily. There is hardly one great instrumental musician who could not have told how he was, at one period or other, approached by the sympathy or patronage of some such man. It is such men as these who "leavened the lump"—in the midst of which our Handel-worship, Haydn - worship, Mozart - worship, Beethoven-worship, Mendelssohn-worship, have successively been nourished with a constancy and an enthusiasm such as have no continental prototypes. That which Fashion, with its wasteful munificence and foolish raptures, has done for music in this country, forms no part of the present subject: because, during the last thirty years, at least, Fashion has followed rather than led the movement; and now resorts willingly where the people lead it. For years, however, the current of love for chamber music may be said to have been deepening and spreading underground. It has lately burst out to open day, and with a strength and brightness peculiar to this country. It is no fashion which holds thousands of listeners mute, whilst a Joachim handles the antique and vigorous preludes, chaconnes, and variations of Sebastian Bach; or while a Hallé sets himself to draw out, in all its delicacy, and depth, and charm of beauty, the full expression and meaning of one of Beethoven's wordless poems—for such are his Sonatas. That our vast London audiences enjoy the least showy and most intellectual works of art, is among the phenomena which the course of the last thirty years has brought about.

Thus much in scanty outline of some among our losses and gains: one which, if filled up and followed up, might include suggestions of some among the reasons why the progress of creative music in England has been so timid, so imitative—so much more a matter of form than of fancy. Seeing that our Tennysons do not try for the melodies of any other country; that our Brownings can discover harmonies as recondite, and sequences as intricate as those combined by the subtlest poetical transcendentalist who ever tried to methodise his dreams, in Germany or in Italy—we might have looked to the swarm of clever English musicians, which has been busy in creation during the last thirty years, for something better than second-hand inspiration, for some individuality of style and humour. But we must have looked only to be disappointed—only to find operatic reminiscences in plenty of Adam, and Auber, and Mercadante, and Rossini's ornaments, and Verdi's violences—or symphonic ones of Spohr and Beethoven, and most and newest of all (to a wearisome satiety) repetitions of Mendelssohn's mannerisms—not of his mind.

We are now coming to the point of retrospect

and comparison, on which it may be well for those to fix attention who desire to ascertain really where England stands among musical nations—namely, “the music meeting” or festival, which Handel established as one of the institutions of this country,—and at a period anything but auspicious. For then, between the precepts of the Puritans still at work in those of a second and third generation,—and the sarcasm of the Wits, our love of music, yet more our participation in its production, had sank to being largely considered as a discredit to men, and a foolish waste of time among women.—It is no light tribute to the power of Handel’s mighty poems, unequal, full of plain transcripts from works already known, hurried out with haste, yet alone in their sublimity—a series which, in their world, bear a curious and close analogy to the plays of Shakespeare—that they spoke at once to ears so ill prepared to hear as those of England at the middle of the eighteenth century. Coarsely flung down on paper as they were,—so many expedients of an unsuccessful man, far advanced in life, to retrieve his fortunes,—they were coarsely and insufficiently performed.—The Master can only have heard them with his mind’s ear;—so inadequate were the choral and orchestral provisions of his time to do justice to his Hallelujah, to his plagues in Israel, and that unsurpassed song of Miriam’s triumph by the Red Sea. Though the court favoured them, the public was not on kindly terms with the court. They had nothing to make their way in England, but their innate power and glory, and the complete satisfaction they brought to England’s musical wants. And accordingly, very shortly after they were produced (the rate of intercourse in those days considered) they became as “household words” in certain of our counties—those betwixt the midland and the borders of England especially. They got into the dales of Yorkshire, and the manufacturing villages of Lancashire and Staffordshire. And to produce them, groups of scantily tutored voices, by nature singularly stout and well-toned, gradually combined themselves into choirs so efficient that their fame was noised abroad. These first Lancashire and Yorkshire performances of Handel must have been quaint indeed. Men, not yet very old, have learned their love of The Messiah, and Samson, and Saul, and Jephtha, and Judas, in some mean ill-lighted dissenting chapel of town or country. How hearty were those honest little music meetings, with all their flaws and defects! with perhaps only a bassoon, a bass-viol, a double bass (and, by way of luxury, sometimes a flute), to help out the organ. I have heard no such trebles anywhere else—so strong, so untiring, and yet so sweet. The voice seemed to run in families, and the best voice of the family—not seldom the mother—would on these occasions represent the Banti, or Billington, or Mara, who took the principal *solo* duty in London.

These good people became so renowned, that they could not be dispensed with in London at

the playhouse Lent Oratorios—so pleasantly commemorated by genial Mr. Henry Phillips, in his late Recollections—and (more august honour still) at the Ancient Concerts. Thirty years ago, when the last mentioned orthodox entertainments were dying of their somnolent grandeur (Hogarth’s scene of a Sleeping Congregation being nightly performed on empty benches, except when the Duke of Wellington was Director for the evening), the chorus was led by these women from Lancashire, brought thither by coaches some twenty-eight hours on the road; the Middlesex voices being then rejected as insufficient, and of disagreeable sound.

Besides the centres of popular activity referred to, “the Music Meeting” had a hold in every cathedral town, which maintained its choir, and was surrounded by resident families, with whom a visit to the pleasures of London was then a rare treat. Especially to be mentioned among the oldest festivals, are those of the Three Choirs, Hereford, Worcester, and Gloucester, which, in their day, did good service as keeping alive some taste for high art. The soil, then, throughout England, was more or less ready for the increase of cultivation, which has developed itself, within the period referred to, in so remarkable a manner.

This began to quicken in London, under the auspices of some amateurs, who, before “Young England” had begun to sentimentalise on the right of labour to have some pleasure, took the matter fairly into their own hands: amateurs, busily engaged during the day, at the desk, and at the counter, having small leisure for the practice of instruments, but a great desire to sing. Without high patronage, without any great pretence, the Sacred Harmonic Society was founded in the Strand, at Charing-cross, and St. James-street; at first its audiences were principally confined to a circle made up of the friends of its performers. The Ancient Concerts died, and well it was they did so, of their own dulness. The public had got past Lenten oratorios at Drury Lane and Covent Garden; where the Death of Nelson and Total Eclipse jostled each other; when the Miriam of Israel had to sing Cherry Ripe, and I’ve been Roaming, and the long farrago of medley music was wound up with a Hallelujah. Thus, in spite of manifest imperfections in performance (which were amended as prosperity brought counsel, not insolence, with it), the lovers of serious music began to find their way to Exeter Hall, though the music meetings there were presided over by no royalties, nor archbishops, nor cabinet ministers;—and the undertaking having a healthy root, and being sagaciously watched over, has grown to what we have seen it—a society after its kind unparagoned in Europe.

Simultaneously with the establishment of the Sacred Harmonic Society, another movement began in so many different quarters, and under so many distinct auspices, as to make it clear that the movement answered, if indeed it was not created by, a popular necessity. Half a dozen teachers of part-singing, working on the

imported schemes of Mainzer, Naegeli, Wilhem, or some methods of their own, broke out into a sudden activity, warranted by the number of those who crowded to them for instruction. There was, of course, some empiricism in the royal promises of the projectors—no lack of controversy, criticism, and recrimination among those recommending rival methods,—and a brisk outbreak of that false fashionable sympathy, which is sure, more or less, to be followed by collapse;—but the amount of good done, and knowledge spread, and interest excited, is not to be over-estimated. The same tale was told on every side, in every world of society throughout the kingdom. And the result is, that whereas London was of old perforce indebted to the sweet singers of Lancashire when a chorus was wanted, it has now its own thousands of singers apt and able to take part in any celebration which may be preparing. The question has come to be one of picking and choosing. And remarkable it is, to have seen how, by the diffusion of cultivation, the quality of the material has been affected. Though the North still retains prominence in the natural richness of its vocal tone, the vast improvement in every other district is not to be overlooked; a fact partly to be ascribed to the widening of the ranks of the amateurs, which necessarily must have its refining influences. Certain it is, that in the Eastern Counties they sing no longer with vowels twisted out betwixt closed teeth—that beneath the sound of Bow Bells, the cockney twang is to be heard no more. Though the Germans shake their heads and know better, there is no help for it! The English are now a great singing people.

Then, progress has come in the midst of much foppery and false endeavour, from what may be called the ecclesiologists; the same who have taken art and ceremonial, as connected with our national religion, into over-care. With the excess of their theories and practices however (if excess there has been) we have nothing to do here. They have meanwhile, no doubt, most essentially raised the tone of parochial singing, and the taste for sacred music throughout England. There is now hardly a cathedral in which some great assemblage of local voices is not annually held; and, to meet the uses of these gatherings, a school of simple and broad composition appears to be rising up, which may end in giving us something as devoutly noble as the great unaccompanied music of the Romish Church, without any dry or affected attempt to drag into the service such barbarous echoes from the world of Paganism as "the tones," which, some twenty years ago, were to be forced, testwise, on all who professed to talk of chants, or anthems, or hymn tunes.

Almost from the first moment of the establishment of these "Music Meetings," that of the town of Birmingham has filled a conspicuous place, and been distinguished by its liberality and excellence, and the admirable discipline with which it has been administered. As the centre of a district rich in

opulent patrons, within reach of two or three of the cathedral towns capable of lending it aid, the capital of Warwickshire, though not gifted with choristers in any proportion to Burnley, or Roehdale, or Oldham, managed, before the close of the last century, to attract the attention of England as a place where once in three years the grandest music was to be heard on the grandest scale. There is no taking up the memoirs of the Lichfield and Derby set, which included accomplished men of art and letters, and that fantastic but not stupid blue-stocking, Anna Seward, without perceiving that before the close of the last century the Birmingham Festival had become an institution of the county. A steady principle of management seems to have been early adopted there and perfected. Thanks to the research and enthusiasm of one or two of those amateurs, who have been mentioned as so characteristic of England, not only were the then new works by the lights of German music brought forward in alternation with those of Handel, but the best men were invited to give a special importance to the Festival, by writing with an express view to performance there.

It seems at first sight strangely discouraging that, our English predilections being so strongly in favour of the sacred cantata or oratorio, we English should not as yet have been able to produce one work of our own which can keep its place; and this not for want of trial, seeing that successively Boyce—whose Solomon contained two vocal pieces long admitted into sacred concerts, Softly rise, and the duet of Together let us range the Fields; and *Florimel*, Greene, and Arne, and Stanley, and Battishill, and Dr. Worgan (with his Hannah), and Croft (whose weak and eclectic Palestine gives another proof of how disappointing an artist a prodigious boy may grow into), tried their best and proved wanting. It is among the regrets which belong to the incomplete career of one of the greatest musicians this country has ever possessed, that Samuel Wesley did not leave it an Oratorio. That there is a stuff in his sacred composition rare in any country was made excellently clear only the other day, by Mr. Henry Leslie's disinterment of his eight-voice psalm, *In exitu Israel*—one of the finest combinations of strict and imaginative composition existing in the library of vocal music.

But, it may be urged, in this most difficult branch of composition, the German musicians have not been much more fortunate than our own. Their land has only four great names, thus examined. There are the stupendous, but somewhat impracticable works of Sebastian Bach—a strange compound of the most colossal genius, the deepest-rooted science, with formal tediousness. There are the oratorios of Handel, never heartily loved by the mass in Germany, though appreciated by Haydn (who was inspired to write his Creation by hearing them in England); by Mozart (whose studies in the form of additional accompaniments to The Messiah, Alexander's Feast, and Acis, are so many mas-

terpieces);—lastly, there are the two oratorios, Psalms and Lobgesang of Mendelssohn. If Beethoven's Mount of Olives be heard from time to time, it is because it was Beethoven's; regarding whom the world has agreed to be idolatrous without question. His great sacred music is to be found in his two Masses. Spohr's oratorios have already passed into the outerlimbo of oblivion, because of their mannerism and want of idea. Meyerbeer, that most sagacious of artists, felt the difficulty of the task too intimately even to be seduced into this form of creation, though tempted again and again. The few honourable and careful efforts made by living men (whom there is no need to name), are hardly destined to the honours of permanent life.

England's great midland Festival, at all events, has from the first done its liberal part in endeavouring to widen, not to narrow, the list of pleasures. It will not be forgotten that the one only oratorio since Handel's and Haydn's which can justifiably rank with theirs, Elijah, was produced at Birmingham: on one of those days which mark a period in the life of every one concerned.

That this Birmingham liberality indirectly brought about one of our most important musical benefits during the last thirty years, remains to be told. More than thirty years ago, an invitation was sent to Zingarelli of Naples—best remembered here as having framed the Romeo in which Pasta acted and sung, but in Italian repute as a sacred composer—to confide some new work to England. His contribution when completed was entrusted to the care of a young Neapolitan student totally unknown, and whose destination was said to be that of a singer: who brought the motett to Birmingham, and sang there without success. From a beginning so obscure and unpromising, who could have augured a career which will live in history as one of the most remarkable, honourable, and peculiar ever led by European musician? Yet such—as the career of the greatest conductor we have ever possessed—began, continued, and followed out in England alone, in the teeth of disinclination, class jealousy, and national prejudice, has been that of the conductor of the last Birmingham Festival—Mr. Costa.

It is even yet too little understood that the peculiar attributes which go to make a great conductor of music, are among the rarities of art. The number of those really admirable in this capacity (as distinct from composers) who have appeared during the last fifty years, could be told on the ten fingers. The most eminent among the dead, perhaps, were Habeneck of Paris, Guhr of Frankfort, and Spontini at Berlin (when presiding over his own operas). Among the living may be named M. Berlioz (when he is acquainted with the music under his care); Herr Rietz of Dresden (when the work has not the misfortune to be an Italian one); and Signor Mariani of Genoa. When Mr. Costa took up the conductor's bâton at the Italian Opera during

Mr. Monck Mason's one year of lesseeship, the office there, as it were, had to be created. The old conductors had sat at the harpsichord, or else had figured away with the violin bow. The choruses in the theatre were traditionally wretched and out of tune, and never dreamed of action; the orchestra was better or worse as chance might please, the main weight of the performance lying on the interest given to the music by the principal singers. It will be seen, then, that no common amount of aptitude, patient study, energy, enthusiasm, and that moral influence without which discipline alone becomes despotism, were required; no common clear-sightedness as to the necessities, but also the latent means, of this country, to raise a nameless youth, step by step, to a supremacy in the management of music in every form—regarding which there is no longer possibility of contest, and which has compelled stupidity and envy to take the safe refuge of silence.

What the presidence of such an artist wisely exercised during a time of transition, and over materials such as have been imperfectly enumerated, can do, was to be heard a few weeks ago at the Birmingham Music Meeting,—in the general excellence of performance unapproached by any in my experience. The sacred music included the Messiah, Elijah, the Lobgesang—these produced without rehearsal! (to such high point of attainment have our performers reached)—the superb music scene from Solomon, Beethoven's Mount of Olives, Mozart's disputed Twelfth Mass, St. Paul, and Mr. Costa's own new oratorio, Naaman. In particular must the two last performances be dwelt on; that of St. Paul as a model of grandeur, spirit, expression, and sobriety, unapproached, it may be fearlessly averred, by any previous rendering of the work, even when its admirable and too early lost composer was there to animate every one by his presence. The scene of the burial of St. Stephen, with its funeral chorus, thus rendered, is one of the most precious possessions which musical memory can have to keep.

It would be only fair, as further illustrating the remarkable excellence of an English festival of the present, as compared with that of a German meeting of the future, to offer some analysis of the new works produced at Birmingham:—to speak of the dignified and thoroughly artistic oratorio by Mr. Costa, just mentioned, excellent because of its Italian style without Italian flimsiness; and to dwell on the ability shown by Mr. Henry Smart in his new Cantata on an Irish legend, and the admirable treatment in Kenilworth, a masque, by Mr. Sullivan, of a scene from the Merchant of Venice (anew showing as his Tempest music had already done, that though the youngest he is our best English illustrator of Shakespeare); but this must be left to other hands. Enough has been said to prove how well England may be satisfied with her executive progress during the last thirty years, so magnificently and triumphantly

expressed, in the great midland music meeting;—and to point out wherefore there is good hope that this country too, may, during a similar period to come, add to the general store of works of art; something created of its own, which shall belong to the Past, by the reverence to known truths displayed; to the Present, by its national fitness and employment of our peculiar resources; and thus have a good hope of living into that Future which awaits all real individual effort, whatever be the world of imagination in which it is exercised.

QUITE ALONE.

BOOK THE SECOND: WOMANHOOD.

CHAPTER LVIII. A DISCOVERY.

POMEROY'S in Great Grand-street was an hotel much patronised by persons from the Eastern Indies—officers home on sick leave, dark-skinned princes, who wore earrings and jewelled caps, and who, standing at the windows in a blaze of diamonds and brocade, seemed to be perpetually waiting for cabs to take them to a masquerade; by maharajahs, begums, governors-general, judges of the supreme courts, and millionnaire merchants returned to their native land, with the fond design of enjoying the fruits of their long labours without livers to help the process of digestion.

Pomeroys "laid itself out" for this particular class of patronage. Its apartments were furnished with great magnificence, displaying much gilding, embroidery, and yellow silk; it had suites of private rooms adapted for every variety of social habit, and for the practice of every form of Eastern religious observance; it provided separate rooms for various castes, nicely discriminating as to the requirements for different manners of eating, smoking, praying, and taking the bath; it had kitchens for all sorts of cookery, Christian and Mahomedan, Brahmin and Hindoo; clean and unclean.

Pomeroys was a very expensive establishment to stop at; and this was one of its chief recommendations to the Indian magnificos who patronised it. By taking up their residence at Pomeroys, they proclaimed to all their friends and to the public at large, through the medium of the Morning Post, that they were very rich, and consequently very important, personages. The frequenters of Pomeroys would not have been content to accept the same accommodation elsewhere for less money. What they chiefly took a pride in was the fact that they paid an exorbitant price for everything they had. If any visitor after a week's residence at Pomeroys had received a bill for such a modest sum as ten, or a dozen pounds, he would have resented it as an insult to his dignity. He would have suspected at once that he had been badly served; that they had given him inferior curry to eat, inferior wine to drink, inferior chairs to sit upon, and an inferior bed to sleep in. What was the object in going to Pomeroys? Was it not to

be able to eat five-pound notes and drink sovereigns!

Such was Pomeroys's Hotel, of which Jean Baptiste Constant was the manager and nominal proprietor.

Constant, sitting in the mourning coach with Lily, on the way to Great Grand-street, opened a conversation with the view of preparing her for her new life and her new prospects. He began with some hesitation, for he had to tell her first of all about her father. Lily had remained, up to that moment, ignorant even of her father's name. She had continued to call herself, and to be called, Lily Floris. She was to know now that her name was Blunt.

"And, my father?" she said, inquiringly; "all that I have heard of him is, that he ill-treated my mother, that he was a bad man, and very poor—a beggar. Was he a beggar?"

"Your father, Lily," said Constant, evading a direct reply to the question in this form, "was a gentleman."

Francis Blunt was all that the countess called him, a cheat, a scoundrel, and a beggar; but from the valet's point of view he was still a gentleman.

"More than that," Constant continued, "your father was a member of a noble family of high descent and great wealth; and you, as his child, Lily Blunt, are a lady."

Lily felt a strange fluttering at her heart. It was not pride; it was scarcely joy. She was thinking of Edgar. Did he know that she was the daughter of an English gentleman?

"It is possible," said Constant, "that you may shortly meet some of your English relatives, and be elevated to the position to which your birth entitles you. I have been searching for you for a long time, with the view of making you acquainted with your position, and, if possible, rescuing you from the misery which you have so long endured; but until chance took me to the circus at Ranelagh I failed in every endeavour to discover you."

Lily thanked him from the bottom of her heart. In the midst of her misery and desolation, she had never dreamt that any one in the wide world was thinking of her. If she could only have known it, her heart would not have been so dead to all hope.

Constant continued:

"It is my inclination, no less than my sacred duty, Lily, for I love you as if you were my own child—it is my dearest wish and desire to see you restored to your family; and I will do everything it is possible to do, with that object; but if I should fail—if the hope which I entertain should be disappointed—will you let me be your guardian, your protector, your father?"

He implored her eagerly, as if he were afraid of being met by the proud and scornful spirit of her mother.

Lily, whose heart was overflowing with gratitude, put all his doubts to flight at once. She seized his hands, and kissed them fervently.

"Heaven bless you!" she said. "I desire nothing better than to be your daughter, to tell

you all that lies at my heart, and to ask for your advice and guidance."

In all his lifetime, Jean Baptiste Constant had not experienced so pure a joy as at that moment. He felt a tremor of delight run through his whole frame. His heart, long since frozen up, melted before the sunshine of the girl's trusting, loving face, looking into his and calling up a bright vision of the past—his eyes filled with tears, and the strong, hardened, man wept.

"God bless you!" he said; "those words have given me the first thrill of real pleasure I have ever felt since your mother was a girl, such as you are now, in the little village of Marouille, in France, where I first saw her."

Constant stopped the coach at the corner of Great Grand-street, got out with Lily, and walked the rest of the way to the hotel. He paused as they were about to enter the house, and said:

"You will not forget that your name is Lily Blunt."

As Constant passed through the hall with Lily to his own private apartments, the situation and its attendant circumstance carried him back to his old life at the Lilies of France, to that time when Valérie was budding into beauty, and stirring in his heart the flame of love long since quenched. A sigh escaped him as he thought of those days of hope, but the remembrance read him a lesson.

After Lily had partaken of some refreshment and rested for a little in the handsome sitting-room behind the bar, Constant, who had been attending to the affairs of the hotel, returned to the room, and with considerable hesitation and mystery of manner, requested her to perform a service.

Lily jumped up eagerly, and expressed her willingness to make herself useful to her guardian in any way.

"I long," she said, "to be employed, to have something to do, and if you will only let me be your servant—"

Constant stopped her.

"You forget, Lily, that you are a lady," he said. "I have no idea of making you a servant; but on this one occasion will you oblige me by—"

Lily interrupted him with an eager offer to perform any service he might require.

"Well, listen," he said; "you shall be a chambermaid for once, and take up this glass of elder-flower water to the gentleman in the blue room. Come, I will show you the way."

Lily took the silver salver from his hands, and followed him to the foot of the grand staircase.

"It is the second room on the first landing," he said. "Knock at the door before you enter."

Lily ascended the softly-carpeted stair, and proceeded as directed to the second door in the corridor. She knocked gently and timidly. There was no answer. She looked round and saw Constant standing at the foot of the stairs, watching her. She knocked again, and this time a feeble voice called "Come in."

Lily opened the door and entered the room.

It was a magnificent apartment furnished in blue and gold, with many ottomans and couches, covered with skins and richly-embroidered cloths, and, for the moment, Lily was so dazzled by the splendour of the fittings, and her vision so lost in the vastness of the room, that she failed to discover the occupant who bade her enter. At last her eye was attracted by a movement on one of the couches, and on advancing further into the room, she discerned the figure of a man reclining upon a heap of pillows. He was an old man with grey hair and a very sallow complexion.

Lily went up to the couch with the salver in her hand, and offered him the goblet of water. The old man turned to take it; and, as he did so, looked up in Lily's face. His outstretched hand suddenly fell by his side, and he uttered a cry of surprise.

"Again that face!" he exclaimed; "again that bright vision that I have seen so often; in life twice, in my dreams many times."

He passed his hand across his eyes, as if he were doubting his senses, and imagined that he was dreaming then. At length Lily spoke.

"I have been desired to bring you this, sir," she said, stooping towards him with the goblet.

"Then it's not a dream this time," he said. "Who are you? Come nearer; let me touch you."

It was now Lily's turn to be startled. She hesitated, and retired a step, timidly.

"Don't be alarmed," he said. "I'm only a poor, weak old man; old before my time, my dear. Come close to me, and let me touch your hand."

He spoke kindly and tenderly; and Lily, dismissing her foolish fears—for he was, as he said, only a poor, weak old man—advanced to the couch and held out her hand.

The old man took it and held it between his own cold palms, and peered into the girl's face curiously.

"The same blue eyes," he muttered, "the same soft brown hair, just as I can remember them—just as they are in the picture. Ah, you are a bonny, bonny lass, just like her, just like her. Thank you; it's very kind of you to come up; come again, my dear, come again. Stop, you may as well tell me your name."

"My name is Lily, sir."

"Lily, Lily," he repeated. "Ah, that is a pretty name; and what else?"

"Blunt, sir," Lily replied.

The invalid, who had been reclining so languidly upon the couch, apparently without the strength to turn himself, started at the word, and sprang to his feet.

"Blunt," he exclaimed, "Blunt! Am I dreaming, or—or are you playing a trick upon me?"

Lily scarcely knew what to reply to these inquiries. Who was this old man, and why had the mention of her name so strangely excited him?

The invalid sank back upon the couch again, and sat gazing at Lily with a child-like wonder.

"Tell me," he said, "who are you? Who

was your father? Was he Frank Blunt? Eh? eh?"

"I believe so, sir," Lily answered.

"You believe so," he repeated; "you believe so. Don't you *know* who your father was?"

"I have been told that my father's name was Francis Blunt."

"You have been told so, and don't know of your own knowledge. That's odd—very odd. And how did you come here, my dear? How did a Blunt come to be a servant in a hotel?"

"I am not exactly a servant, sir," Lily replied.

"Not exactly a servant!" he said. "Then what are you? I don't understand it; it's all a mystery, a puzzle. Here, Franz, Franz, Franz Stimm, you rascal, come here."

It was clear that Franz Stimm was a party to Constant's plot, for he entered the room immediately his name was called.

"Come here, sir," said the invalid; "do you know this young lady, or anything about her?"

"Yah mein signor, of course I knows dat young leddi; she is the liddle cal, ver mooch grown big, vat we see in de steam-boat. Ah," the courier continued, addressing Lily; "you forget me; but I not forget your preddy face."

"I have not forgotten you," said Lily; "you were very kind to me."

"Vat," cried Franz, "you remember de joggolate, eh?"

"What do you know about the young lady, Stimm?" the invalid asked.

"Mein generale," said the courier, "I know dat she is ver preddy cal; but Monsieur Constant knows all about her fadder and her modder, de andsome dame you know, dat loog like de diger in de steam-boat."

"Then, let Monsieur Constant attend me," said the invalid.

Monsieur Constant was not far off, and Stimm returned with him instantly. Monsieur Constant explained all to the invalid in a few words. Lily was the daughter of Francis Blunt.

"And I," said the invalid, raising himself and holding out his hands to Lily, "I am George Blunt, your father's brother, and your uncle. Let me be your uncle and your father both, for poor Frank's sake, and for our mother's sake; you are the very image of her."

And so Lily was adopted by the rich old nabob of Cutchapore, a widower without chick or child of his own to leave his millions to.

CHAPTER LIX. THE BROKEN IDOL.

Lily was now no longer Quite Alone. Her uncle idolised her, and was never tired of smoothing her beautiful brown hair and gazing with childish rapture at her lovely blue eyes.

George Blunt had not brought much liver home with him from India, but he had managed to preserve his heart. The former organ he had exercised overmuch, the latter not at all. In the pursuit of money-getting he had put his heart aside altogether, preserved it, as it were, in spirits of wine in a sealed bottle. And now,

when he had done with rupee grubbing, he opened the bottle and found his heart in a fine state of preservation.

He was quite foolish in his demonstrations of affection towards his pretty niece. He could not bear her to be out of his sight for a moment. He fondled and patted her as a child plays with a doll; he said inconceivably silly things to her in praise of her good looks, such childish nonsensical things that Lily quite blushed for him. If she had been a doll he would certainly never have rested until he had taken out and examined those lovely blue eyes which he was always looking at with so much wonder and delight.

Constant was jealous of the old man. So was Franz Stimm. Constant almost repented of having brought Lily and her uncle together. The good-hearted courier went about regretting that the "preddy liddle cal" had outgrown her taste for joggolate. He took courage one day, and respectfully suggested joggolate. Lily took some which the courier offered her, and thanked him with many smiles, putting the sweetmeat in her pocket. Franz was quite hurt because she did not eat it there and then.

"Ah," he muttered to himself, "she is too big leddi now for joggolate; she is afraid of her stomjacks; but the liddle cal is nevare afraid of her stomjacks; oh no."

George Blunt had heard the history of his brother Frank's career from Constant, and reproached himself bitterly for not having been at hand to help him in his distress and misery. He now heard from Lily the history of her sad life, and the pitiful story moved him to tears. She told him all, not even omitting the cause of her flight from Madame de Kergolay's—her passion for Edgar Greyfaunt.

"He is not worthy of you, my dear, can't be worthy of you," he said, "to treat you as he has done. But you shall be as good as he, or any of them; the blood of the Blunts runs in your veins; and the money of George Blunt shall chink in your pocket, and I'll warrant you'll have a score of fellows at your feet in no time."

The Indian nabob, vain of his ancient lineage, and no less proud of his wealth, was deeply hurt at the idea of his brother's child being slighted and looked down upon; and he resolved that Lily should not only vindicate her position, but also glorify the family name. He had nothing to show in his own person (for he was a mere bag of bones) for the immense riches which he had acquired in India. His poor mummy of a body, wrapped in the richest robes, and decked with the finest gems, was but an object of pity.

Lily rose upon the old man's vision like a star in the dark. He found a beautiful idol upon which to hang his gold and his pearls—one who would wear them worthily, and command homage to his wealth. He loaded her with presents, dressed her in the richest robes, decked her with the rarest gems, engaged for her the handsomest suite of apartments in the hotel, bought her a brougham and a saddle-horse, and appointed a maid and a groom specially to attend upon her. The poor, friendless, lonely girl, so

recently discharging the humble duties of a horse-rider's dresser in the gardens of Ranelagh, was now a princess.

But the jewels and the fine dresses did not make Lily happy. In the midst of the splendour in which she lived, she was thinking with an aching heart of Edgar. His sudden disappearance on the night of her mother's death, and the return of his cheque, filled her with a vague fear that something had happened to him. She shrank from making inquiries about him; partly from a feeling of modesty, partly because she was unwilling that any one should think she doubted him. She resolved to say nothing on the subject, for a time at least; hoping that he would soon call to see her, or that she might meet him in the Park during her rides and drives. She went into the Park daily, either in her brougham, or on horseback. She had taken lessons at a riding-school, and became in a very short space of time an accomplished horse-woman. She had learned fast; for love was her teacher. She had learned to ride, that she might dispense with the attendance of a coachman and footman, and go out in the Park on horseback "Quite Alone." Her uncle humoured her in everything. If she had desired to ride in the Park on an elephant, he would have sent emissaries into Africa to procure her the finest specimen that could be found.

Weeks passed away, and Edgar had not called at the hotel; nor had Lily succeeded in meeting him in the Park. Her uncle and Constant both observed that, spite of her daily exercise in the fresh air, she was becoming pale, and thin, and careworn. Constant was aware of Lily's passion for Edgar, and feeling assured that her malady was love-sickness, he begged to be admitted to her confidence. After some hesitation she told him the state of the case frankly. She had been looking for Edgar day after day, and week after week, but in vain. She was afraid that he was ill, or that some misfortune had befallen him. Constant undertook to make inquiries. He did so; and found that the magnificent Mr. Greyfaunt had been arrested for debt, and was locked up in a spunging-house in Cursitor-street.

The young scapegrace had set up for a man of fashion upon the little fortune left him by his grand-aunt, Madame de Kergolay. It amounted to five thousand pounds, neither more nor less, and Edgar had spent the principal instead of the interest, living for the time at the rate of three thousand a year.

Constant did not at once inform Lily of the discovery he had made. He was anxious to find out what sort of person Mr. Edgar Greyfaunt was. He had no particular doubts about him before; but now, when he heard of him as the inhabitant of a spunging-house, he began at once to suspect that Edgar was a very bad young fellow. As a prosperous innkeeper, Monsieur Constant regarded impecuniosity in a gentleman of Mr. Greyfaunt's position as the worst of crimes.

Constant employed Franz Stimm as his emis-

sary and agent. Stimm visited the spunging-house, and saw Edgar, saying that he came from an unknown friend who was anxious to serve him. A few weeks behind prison bars had worked a great change upon the dandy—the usual change. The loss of liberty had degraded him, as it degrades nearly all men, however proud their spirit, however high their moral tone. In a few weeks the elegant exquisite had been transformed into a shabby, slouching, jail-bird. He had taken to slippers and wide-awake hats, to spirits-and-water and clay pipes. He shuffled about in a paved yard behind the bars, and associated without scruple with all comers. Debt is a great leveller—as great a leveller almost as death. In a spunging-house or a prison it brings all ranks together, and links them in the bond of a common brotherhood. The most noble person in a debtors' prison is he who owes most money. But the pettiest shopkeeper is on a footing with a lord in one respect—he is a debtor. The influence of debt and durance manifests itself in both alike—it conduces to down-at-heel shoes, carelessness as to clean linen, the growth of the beard, the smoking of common kinds of tobacco, and the consumption of vulgar drinks. Even if the lord have money, he finds, after a short residence in a debtors' prison, that he is acquiring a taste for the grosser kinds of luxuries. He begins to prefer shag tobacco to cigars, and to have an inordinate craving for beer.

Edgar very soon succumbed to the genius of that dingy house in Cursitor-street. Franz Stimm wondered what the preddy leddle leddi could see in such a shabby-looking fellow. Franz was armed with very careful instructions. He informed Greyfaunt of Lily's accession to fortune. She had found her uncle, a rich Indian nabob (he did not mention his name), who had adopted her, and designed to leave her the whole of his vast wealth.

Edgar caught at the news eagerly, and his eyes sparkled with expectancy. "What a fool! what an ass I have been!" he muttered to himself. He questioned Stimm as to the motives of the unknown friend who had sent him the news. Stimm explained that the unknown friend, who was aware of the position in which Mr. Greyfaunt stood towards Miss Lily, had an eye to business.

"Ah, I perceive," said Edgar; "he is a money-lender, and you are his agent."

Franz admitted that that might be the case.

"Well, look here," said Edgar; "if you will lend me the money and get me out of this cursed place, you shall have a hundred per cent for your master, and fifty per cent for yourself. It is only a miserable sum of two hundred pounds."

"But de security?" said Stimm.

"I have no security to offer you but my own note of hand," said Greyfaunt, "and you know what my expectations are. The girl is madly in love with me, and I have only to make her an offer to secure the prize. She will throw herself into my arms, fortune and all."

"Vil you gif me a letter to dat effect dat I show mein master?" said Stimm.

"Certainly," said Greyfaunt. "Who is your master? Let me know the name of my disinterested friend?"

"His name is Constant," said the courier.

"What! Constant, who keeps Pomeroy's Hotel?"

"De same," said Franz.

"Ah," said Greyfaunt, gaily, "they are sharp fellows, those hotel-keepers. Constant has, no doubt, got wind of the girl's attachment to me, and wants to do a stroke of business over the affair. Very good, Monsieur Constant, I am obliged to you."

And the heartless puppy, who would not have hesitated to buy Lily first and sell her afterwards, sat down and wrote a letter to the hotel-keeper. It ran thus:

"Sir,—If you are willing to lend me two hundred pounds, I will give you my note of hand for five hundred, or a larger sum if you require it. I understand that you are fully aware of the freak of fortune which has transformed the daughter of a circus-woman into a sort of Indian princess. I believe, too, you are not ignorant of the fact that she is devoted to me, and that I have only to hold up my finger to make her mine. Nothing stands between me and the golden prize but the bolts and bars of this infernal cage. You may ascertain this for yourself, only use discretion. If you serve me in this, you shall have no reason to complain of your share of the plunder.

"Yours, &c.,

"EDGAR GREYFAUNT.

"To J. B. Constant, Esquire."

"There," said Greyfaunt, "take your master that, and let me have an answer at once. Delays are dangerous in these cases."

Stimm took the letter to his master, and Jean Baptiste Constant opened and read it. He had already been warned with respect to Greyfaunt's character, but he was not prepared for such heartlessness, such sordid baseness as this letter disclosed.

"The scoundrel!" he muttered through his teeth. "It is lucky for him I did not go, Stimm. I should have murdered him. And it is for such a wretch as this that poor Lily is sighing her life away! She cannot know how base he is, but she shall know; she shall not remain ignorant of his character for another hour."

Constant's first impulse was to show Lily the letter at once, but on reflection he decided to proceed more cautiously, and to break the news by degrees. He told her, first, that he had succeeded in discovering Greyfaunt.

Lily's eager look of pleasure pained him, and filled his breast with anger. He could scarcely restrain himself. To the torrent of anxious inquiries which she poured upon him, he replied coldly, without any further attempt to soften the information which he had to convey.

"Edgar Greyfaunt," he said, "is a heartless adventurer. Read that letter."

Lily read the letter, read it again and again without lifting her eyes, and at length her head sank upon her bosom, and the letter fell from her hands upon the floor. The idol her yearning heart had set up for itself in the days of her solitude lay crushed and broken at her feet.

NUMBER SEVEN, BROWN'S-LANE.

THE physician who has been reporting lately to the Privy Council upon the condition of the London needlewomen, found that day-workers in large millinery establishments earn nine shillings a week, or a little more, of which half-a-crown, or three shillings, is paid by each for the room she calls her own, and the rest has to find dress and food. They get only their tea at the place of business. At nine, ten, or eleven, on a winter's night they go home to their cold garrets, light a fire, if they can afford fuel, and cook the scanty supper that is the only real meal of the day; or, if they cannot light a fire, go to bed cold, supperless perhaps, and often thinly clad. There is one house thoughtful enough to keep a servant who cooks for these poor girls at mid-day the little dinner they may bring; their chops and sausages, potatoes, or batter in gallipots. Many, says their cook, bring meat only now and then; some never, but eat instead of it bread-and-butter, or bread and pickles. A pennyworth of bread and a pennyworth of pickles is a common dinner of the poorer needlewomen. The pieces of meat when brought are often so small as hardly to be worth cooking, often coarse little scraps, and even tainted. This represents, be it understood, the condition of the middle class of needlewomen, in the prime of life. What becomes of them when they are old? As a common rule, with, of course, many exceptions, a dressmaker as old as thirty-five can hardly get employment in a fashionable house, for she is prematurely aged, her fingers have lost suppleness, her jaded mind has lost the interest in dress that keeps up what is called taste among women. What becomes, then, of the old dressmakers? Mrs. Chevalier, the manager of a Home in Great Ormond-street, explains their case in this way: "Taking any moderately good worker it is found that she continues stationary only for a few years. Some rise in their calling, becoming in succession second and first hands, and at last, having saved money, go into business on their own account; others marry and leave their occupation; others, after mastering dressmaking and millinery, take service as ladies' maids; and lastly, too many go down in the scale, are found not to be good enough for their employment, and degenerating into poor needlewomen, drift away eastward."

When we hear of distress in London that has drifted away eastward, we simply feel that it has been added as one drop more to a heavy cup of bitterness. For many a mind the West and

the East Ends of London might be represented each by its cup, sweet wine in the one, and in the other wine from the "grapes of gall, whose clusters are bitter." But the East, even where want is hungriest, is no more wretched for its poverty than is the West all happy for its wealth. It is not only that many there who have no treasures of earth to care for, concentrate all man's natural desire for wealth upon the treasures of a future world, and find the way to spiritual life more easily for being led by one who prayed to his Father as they too have prayed, "If it be thy will let this cup pass from me, yet not my will but thine be done." In the actual life of the very poor there is a closer contact with the weighty truths that have sunk through the light waters above and lie at the bottom of life's well. For these sufferers too lie at the bottom of the well. They have not generally the broken image of sympathy that shines up through the surface waters of the fashionable world; the wise and practical benevolence which forms the subject of this article excepted. The chief sympathy they get lies most amongst themselves. It lies close and touches them. Acts of free service and ungrudging, unobtrusive aid, visibly interchanged one to another, represent in their common intercourse the only form that sympathy can take where the claim is obvious and incessant upon mutual help and forbearance. They want nobody to teach them any theory of society by which its problems shall be solved. They see the naked principles of life at wrestle with each other. For them Greed never wears a mask, or softens his harsh voice, or bows with a mock-pliant affability, and hides his claws under his coat-cuffs, as he does when he makes calls at the West End. For them Pride does not ape humility; for them Anger disdains to keep within the fence of covert irony and satire, but rages coarse and cruel with a fury unrestrained; Hate, when he comes among them, beats, kicks, stabs, and throttles. It is sometimes said that the distressed poor, from want of refinement, do not feel as we fine folk should feel under like circumstances. Perhaps not. The first sensation of many of our highly refined selves, if reduced fairly to like close acquaintance with the undisguised forces and passions of life, would be as of the application of stiff besom to the social cobwebs spun over our eyes.

Down in the East of London, and wherever else in a Christian land the struggle of life is reduced to its elements, the conflicting forces battle about every poor man's way as distinctly as John Bunyan ever saw them. Terribly real there is the den in Doubting Castle where the prisoners of Giant Despair might lie "from Wednesday morning till Saturday night, without one bit of bread, or drop of drink, or light, or any to ask how they did." They feel in all their flesh the beating they get from the giant's crab-tree cudgel, and hear him ask, "Why should you choose life, seeing it is attended with so much bitterness?" But for these bruised souls also there is an escape to the Delectable

Mountains, and they are as men walking with angels when the shepherds of those mountains, Knowledge, Experience, Watchful and Sincere, give them welcome and look lovingly upon them as they ask, "Is there in this place any relief for pilgrims that are weary and faint by the way?" And to their asking answer, "The Lord of these Mountains hath given us a charge not to be forgetful to entertain strangers; therefore the good of the place is before you." We may go down to that east end of our little world of London—to Spitalfields or Bethnal-green—whither poverty drifts, and see there, when we come to know some of its inmates, men and women walking on the Delectable Mountains, beholding its gardens and orchards, its vineyards and fountains of water. We may find there also tents of the shepherds of the mountains. Such a tent may look like a little house in a poor street—there is one at Number Seven, Brown's-lane, Spitalfields; but by the suffering poor, who therein find those very shepherds, Knowledge, Experience, Watchful and Sincere, their ever ready aids and comforters, the living truth of life is seen here also through its shell. If they in their hard struggle hear, as it were, the hideous roaring of a visible Apollyon, they see also the Shining Ones as they walk commonly among them in the land that is upon the borders of heaven, and even from Number Seven, Brown's-lane, can see the not distant radiance of the city of Immanuel. To the educated mind, with a large element of speculation in its thoughts of life and of religion, it is wonderful to note how closely the spiritual allegory of the tinker's son is fitted to the real mind of our suffering and tempted poor. There is a sacred superstition in the actual images by which all spiritual things are represented to the mind as half material realities.

Let us visit now those shepherds of the mountain in the tent known at Spitalfields as Number Seven, Brown's-lane. It is the only house in the lane with steps to its door, a house into which they who go, go up. As a public institution it has a very modest name, for it is called simply "Miss Burdett Coutts's Sewing School." It is a great deal more than it calls itself. If we had not called it the tent of the four shepherds, we might liken it to one of the fresh fountains upon the Delectable Mountains, at which pilgrims recovered strength upon their onward way; a fountain that began to bubble up three years ago, and pours now a rich stream of health over a thirsty soil. But we abide by our faith in it as the tent of the four shepherds whom Miss Coutts takes into her pay to carry out her sagacious, well-considered plan.

Connected with the Brown's-lane Sewing School is a complete system of carefully-devised help for the poor of eight districts or more in Bethnal-green and Spitalfields. There are no rigidly defined boundaries of action; the simple desire is to reach with a kind word and a helping hand all the distress lying round about.

Eight district clergymen take more or less part in the finding of fit persons to help, and the bringing of fit help to them, but the clergy have no sort of control over the charity, which is free as the gentle rain to freshen where it falls. The Sewing School is for the help of in-door and of out-door workers. It is not a school for the training of young girls to the bad business of needlewomen; on the contrary, it very carefully avoids doing that.

In-doors its school-girls are old girls who have, many of them, grandchildren, and who are recommended by want and a good character to the opportunity of here spending a profitable afternoon, from half-past one till five o'clock, in earning what they can. They get in winter a good meal of soup and bread before they begin work, and in summer stay for tea and bread and butter, and have a lump of bread to carry home after their work is done. They need not be good or bad needlewomen when they come for such help; they are taught, if necessary, by their good shepherds Watchful and Sincere (the manager's wife and sister) how to earn something every week for their own sustenance in aid of the poor family at home. Married women, too, may come and learn how to stitch well if they do not already know. The school does not open till half-past one, so that they cannot come till they have done their morning duties in the house, and seen to the dinner of their husbands and children. That done, they may come into the tent of the good shepherds, and by a few hours' needlework help to pay for the scanty comforts of those whom they cherish. They are paid according to the quantity of work they do, but when they are infirm with age and dim of sight, they are paid by the hour. What it is meant to give is Help, and while great care is taken that no sort of help shall be a substitute for proper industry and individual exertion, no wall of formal rule is suffered to part a true need from the touch of sympathy.

Out of doors the Sewing School gives work to be done by poor women who bring from some respectable person written security for work entrusted to them. Having shown by stitching a sample in the sewing-room that they can work well enough to content the government inspectors of shirts, whom Brown's-lane has to satisfy, they are allowed to take out six or twelve shirts at a time, are paid for them by ones or twos, or as they will, whenever they bring them back, and when alterations are found necessary are not sent empty away, but are allowed to sit down in the sewing-room and make their work right on the spot. Needles are sold to them at wholesale prices; cottons and other requisites are given to them free. The work given is only shirt-making, and no other than that furnished by part of the government contract for making the shirts of our soldiers and sailors. There are regulation quality of material, and a regulation make, so strictly preserved, that a shirt will be rejected for a broken thread in its calico, or for a quarter of an inch too much or too little of gathers in the making, or for a drop of oil from

the sewing-machine on any part of it. The price paid at Number Seven, Brown's-lane, for the hand-stitching of such a shirt is fivepence-half-penny, but that is not for the whole making. It is already more than the ghost of a shirt before it comes into the hands of the needlewoman, every part being ready cut and prepared, and its main parts already put together by the sewing-machine. Thus, at fivepence-halfpenny for the making of each shirt so fully prepared, there is one industrious woman of forty, with a sickly husband and two daughters, one of whom helps her a little, who can make half a dozen shirts a day, and is now generally earning fifteen shillings a week. She began at the Sewing School as a slow worker, and now makes the highest rate of earnings. The average is seven or eight shillings; but this is very commonly money earned in the intervals of household duty, that makes in a poor home the difference between hard want and a sufficient living. About five hundred women are in the course of a year helped in this way at Number Seven, Brown's-lane, the number of workers thus employed at one time being about sixty in-doors and two hundred out of doors.

On the first floor we find some of the sixty busy on wristbands, and other mysteries too deep for the masculine intellect. Here is a grandmother, ever garrulous of her soldier son, whose life was miraculously saved in some battle of a yet further East than this. She has a picture of the battle, and an ever-welling memory of the great mercy that spared to her her boy. And so, among the fellow-strugglers with herself in their own battle of the east, she talks of a far war, all forgetting that which is near to them, that in which they have themselves struggled and been trampled down, and raised again, and carried for the healing of their wounds into the cool and pleasant tent of the good shepherds. "It is so pleasant to come here," says a worker dim of eye, "for all the while we are here we never hear a sound of anger." Ah, the relief from the chiding in the dark dens of that giant Despair, from whom they are rescued! The grating cry of the impatient sufferer, the shriek of the child struck by the hungry mother, who has been for a vain solace to the gin-shop, the bared passions, the naked vice that brawls and curses in the street before the window of the quietest in those chill homes, the never silent roaring of Apollyon! One who knew nothing of the life thus comforted, might not have guessed how prominent a charm would be the mere peace and quiet of the tent on the Delectable Mountain.

Quiet! Well, that exists only metaphorically on the top floor, where are the sewing-machines, one of them Thomas's, and if that particular machine cannot thrash wheat as well as stitch, it ought to do so, for the noise, as of a great thrashing, that it makes. The sewing-machine is establishing itself as a benefactor at the East End of the town. It is a benefactor, first, because a young woman at a sewing-machine can earn almost twice as much as she can with a needle; secondly, because there is an amount of general

bodily exercise at this work, which makes the women employed at sewing-machines healthier than those who live by their needle; and thirdly, because, although it gets through the work of many persons while only employing one, it can, as we see at Number Seven, Brown's-lane, be so used in the preparation of handwork as to improve very sensibly the earnings of hand-workers who labour in subordination to it. Its tendency is thus to revive, with new and wholesome sap, a sickly, overgrown, and almost poisonous calling. One of the sewing-machines at Brown's-lane prepares in a day five dozen shirts for the makers; but what one person with machine help thus prepares, it takes eighteen or twenty to make up. Even where there are middlemen to profit by the labour of the poor, the sewing-machine has bettered the old wages of slopwork, upon which there are still women wearing themselves in the old way by endless hours of ill-paid labour, hungry and sleepless, to the grave. Number Seven, Brown's-lane, does not, on the other hand, compete with the fair trader in any way. It is managed like any other workshop, and is made to yield a profit, even on the minimum prices paid by government, whose work it only undertakes.

On this top floor, in a room next to that wherein the sewing-machines work, the cutting out is done, under particular superintendence of the shepherds or shepherdesses Watchful and Sincere. It is a matter of no small consequence to have the right way of exact and simultaneous cutting of the divers round, and square, and otherwise complex pieces, that when put together make a shirt. It was said that it could be done only on any considerable scale for the saving of time with a costly piece of machinery. But, like a thousand problems of society said to be solvable only by help of the most ingenious apparatus of wheels within wheels, the thing to be done and the easiest way of doing it had only to be clearly seen and heartily gone into, to be achieved by the most unpretending of all agencies. For when Sincere gave her mind even to the cutting out question, she very soon found that the thing required could be done perfectly with no more complex machinery than a long knife and a slit or two in an old kitchen table. That is pretty much the general experience of life. Sincere is the great simplifier.

Now, if it be nearly five o'clock, and we come down stairs from the top to the bottom, we shall find at the foundation of the house a kitchen, that, before Number Seven was taken for its present purpose, had been used as a great dust-hole, and was full of rottenness, that sent a steam of death up through the house. It was a typical change that transformed this den of corruption into the well-swept kitchen, with its genial fire alight, a mighty can of tea brewing upon the hearth, and sending up a steam of health, sixty mugs on the table waiting to be filled, and on a side-table bread in abundance to be eaten, and also to be carried out for help to the sustenance of other homes. We taste of

the good brew an' go up again into the little office by the entrance door.

Two women are there, each with a bit of paper in her hand. They are district nurses, paid chiefly by the Institution for Nursing Sisters in Devonshire-square, and partly by the clergy in whose parishes they visit. The papers in their hands are lists, each with about a score of names of sufferers, the fever smitten, the palsied, the bedridden, the women who lie with young infants freshly born into a home of want. They bring their daily lists into the tent of the good shepherds, to whose charge also is given that they entertain the sick and suffering among the poor with meat and wine. A ticket for a shilling's-worth of meat may look like a commonplace document; but in the haunts of poverty the most illegible and complex physician's prescription, bristling with cabalistic signs and abbreviated pestle-Latin, sinks low in comparison with this:

Recipe,—

Rumpsteak, one pound.

Cook.

To be eaten directly.

As for the wine, here it is in cask as imported; a strong and sweet white wine, and a pure Bordeaux, topped by a cask of good brandy. The poor also owe thanks to Mr. Gladstone for the cheap and wholesome varieties of pure light wine that he has enabled them to bring to the sick-bed in place of the old doctored port and sherry that were only one degree less noxious than the most part of the apothecary's physic. We hope to see the system of administering relief through the agency of out-door nurses paid out of the parish rates, widely adopted.

If we could have three wishes for the poorest people of the East, the wishes might well be for Meat and Wine and Whitewash. And even for the whitewash there is thought taken at Number Seven, Brown's-lane. In times when work is hard to get, the unemployed and partially employed men of the surrounding district are there provided with the means of keeping their home standing till the better day arrives. Only under exceptional conditions is a whole day's work given to any able-bodied man. Were that done there would be interference with the natural and healthy stimulus to seek work in the ordinary way. But if a poor man cannot get a day's work, he may do half a day's work for Number Seven, from half-past one to eight o'clock, and be sure of a shilling if a single man, or eighteenpence if married; in this, as in every case, the condition of help being that the applicant is "needy and deserving." If no other work can be found him, he is sent to carry the free ministrations of the whitewash pail to homes that need and will accept them, is set to paper rooms, repair the broken table, mend the window through which the wind whistles contempt of want, make a roof weather-tight, or help keep in repair the churches of the district. Small orders for work are also given to men partially employed: the rug-weaver is set to work upon a hearth-rug, the starving shoemaker is set to

make boots, perhaps for the servants and sailor-boys who also come to Number Seven, Brown's-lane, for their outfit. For when a poor girl, recommended by a clergyman as "deserving and needy," has obtained her first place as a servant, she may have given to her at Brown's-lane an outfit of dresses and under-clothing, shawl and bonnet, stockings, boots, bedgowns, aprons, and caps, that enables her to present herself in a fit manner to her employers. The clothes thus given are made in that same tent on the Delectable Mountain, and three hundred such outfits have been given within the last two or three years. With a like liberality poor and deserving boys receive gifts of the outfit necessary for their proper entrance into the Merchant Service. For the Royal Navy, few lads in this poverty-stricken district are tall enough or stout enough.

Then there are within the tent stores of "maternity boxes" for the lending of all needful things to distressed women about to become mothers; and five hundred blankets under which every winter their bodies lie warm. They are lent when winter is setting in, and are returned clean some time in May.

If we go from the house to the little homes of the poor whom it comforts, we may the more clearly see the worth of its work. Here are some cases from the experience of one of the district clergy: A man, eighty-five years old, has been married for more than half a century to the wife who, now that the grown-up children have left the nest, is his only companion. They want food, and even clothing; they have sold their bed to pay their rent, and they owe rent. Brown's-lane knows that they have done their share of labour in this world, and are entitled now to sympathy and solace, and Brown's-lane gave them all last winter what was necessary to their health and comfort. Old people in seasons of distress are thus saved from the workhouse, the scraps of furniture, of which the oldest may have in their little household the most sacred memories—the sampler worked by the girl who is their child-daughter in heaven, the little chair in which she sat, the patchwork quilt that granny made when she was young, and grandfather was courting her—these things are saved to them, and their own lives also are sustained. The mortality among the aged in the one parish, of which records are before us, was last winter lessened so considerably, that only two of the number died. A whole family was fever-stricken; the father and two children were taken to the workhouse, the mother and two children were left in the poor and dirty home. From Number Seven, Brown's-lane, meat, and wine, and whitewash came; the father returned convalescent. Meat and wine were still supplied; every life was saved, and the family is now well, and earning without help its own scanty living. A poor weaver, with a wife and five children, failed in eyesight; meat and wine gave him his sight again, and to the help given while he was unable to work was added the finding for him of work more suited to his physical condition. He has now begun the

world afresh, and prospers. Here, again, says the record, sustained help is brought to an aged couple, whose united earnings are five shillings a week. The old man has been run over, and is deaf. Here, again, help is given to a widowed grandmother, who lives with a widowed daughter, both trying in vain to get bread, shelter, and clothing, as washerwomen. Here it is help to a poor old widow, who is dependent on a sickly son. And here, again, the help is to a wife with a bad husband, who has left her and her family to starve, or to a wife and children where the bread-winner is lately dead, or lamed by an accident. A man who could find no work was set to the repair of bedsteads, and other necessary articles that he found broken and useless, and in this way were restored comfort and tidiness to the homes of twenty families, at a total cost of two pounds twelve and sevenpence-halfpenny for labour and material.

If we leave the tent of the four shepherds, and, still on the Delectable Mountain, travel homeward by way of Columbia-square, built by Miss Coutts to provide cheap, wholesome, and comfortable homes for two hundred families,* we may glance also at the market which the same lady is causing to rise by its side, for bringing into the district—with which she has no tie but that of human sympathy—plenty of good food at the fairest market prices. We might turn aside, also, to look at the Ragged School that stands near by to feed the starved minds of the children. But it is more than an afternoon's work to see all that a wise head and munificent hand, prompted by a warm and sympathising heart, has been for months and years maturing for the wretchedest end of London.

Let Number Seven, Brown's-lane, be recognised—now that winter, always hard and biting to the poor, approaches—as an example of what one head can effect for a whole district. Once established, the working details are not difficult to carry out, nor more expensive (being partly self-supporting) than lie within the scope of much less affluence than the means with which Miss Coutts is blessed—and blesses. The example of that lady, who originates this practical mode of uniting charity with profitable work, is always a safe one to follow in good deeds of a like kind.

A BOARD OF GREEN CLOTH.

CHAPTER I. OUR HOTEL.

CHARLES LAMB gossips in his delightful and fanciful way upon the names of Books, showing how certain authors' names seem to bring up with them a sort of fragrance, or even music. He instances Kit, Marlowe, Drummond of Hawthornden, and some more. Had the same vein pursued him, had he loved Fleet-street less and travelling more, and ever have found himself as I find myself now, under the white curtains of a very white window in a very white room, looking on the cheerful gardens of our Wies-

* See vol. vii., page 301.

baden hotel, he would surely have fallen into a speculation on the names of hotels—how they fit their character, and have a fragrance of their own, and we should, perhaps, have had one delightful paper the more in Elia.

The name of our house is The Rose, or Rosenhaus, or, prettier still, Hôtel de la Rose. Elia, seeing it in his Bradshaw, would have driven straight to it. A charming little settlement. You like saying the word over many times in the day, as if you were ringing a little silver handbell. "I am at the Rose," "Just come from the Rose," "Going to dine at the Rose," with more to the like song. Yet we drive through zig-zag streets, that twist like forked lightning, that are no longer than some dozen yards, where great houses are set down capriciously—now with corners forward, now sides, now fronts, now backs, like the little toy towns of delightful memory, bought for us when children—consisting of a dozen solid little houses, which we could set up just as we pleased, building a new town every day with inexhaustible variety. Emerging from one of these little lanes, we drive up right into our settlement of The Rose.

Our settlement—that is, our Rose—consists of many houses, as it were, of many leaves: part of it is over the way, part to the right, part to the left. All these rosebuds, however, are grouped about a delightful and most inviting garden, with bowers, and arbours, and alcoves, where the guests, filled with good things, are fond of wandering. At breakfast and dinner times, when the bell rings out, you see the company trooping from the scattered houses—from these out-settlements—across the garden.

Our Rose is bright cream colour, and every window has its cream-coloured eyelids, or "jalousies," which sometimes flap noisily all together. Yet it does not glare; for as you look up, it seems to lie at the foot of a green bank just overhead, which is well furnished with more yellow houses: all as bright and festive looking as can be conceived. Just over our garden we can see a walk covered in with light iron-work, the light work hidden away by vines and creepers, and people pass and re-pass on this, pausing now and then to look down into our garden; while we who are smoking languidly, like Moslems, with our ladies busy with work, look up in our turn and see gentlemen in grey hats with broad black bands, and moustaches—that look as if swelled and inflamed, they stick out so bluntly and puffy—and who carry little red goblets out before them, as if wishing some one else to drink it for them. Pass, too, ladies in broad straw hats, also hospitably obtruding their tumblers. In short, we see a patch of the moving procession of drinkers, who are now on their "beat," and trying to cool their liquor, which the young lady of the fountain has drawn for them raging hot.

I like everything about our Rose, it is so white and clean, so spacious, with such a fine dining-hall, like a convent refectory, with a gallery at the top for musicians to play in.

There we dine a hundred and fifty strong. There shaven boy-waiters, always gay and free with you, yet not disrespectful, seud to and fro, and proffer the welcome dish. There Bullington—very hearty, and fresh as a sea captain—talks loudly to the attendants in his native tongue and is understood by them, and says to his brother that they are really getting civilised in these places. There our host, who must have as much on his mind as a cabinet minister, hovers about at all hours with a calm melancholy on his face, which has all the shaven blueness of one of the Spanish mucheros in Mr. Philip's pictures. He is a gentleman; but his life is one long dinner. Dinner in some stage prevails the whole day long, and the guests rush to the assault at one, and at five. There are Britons among us whose whole soul is in this meal, and who, from noon, are restlessly looking at their watches, fearful of being surprised. I like, too, our breakfasts—in their simplest character: the freshest and coolest of butter, the best of milk, and the delicious "close" white little rolls, all of which in many a morning walk I have seen; the cleanest and most comfortable of peasants carrying in to the town from neighbouring market gardens. And I like our little eccentric brass-kettles in the shape of diving-bells, with brass stands for spirit-lamps, which are quaint to look at. Our host, too, has pleasant ways about him, which makes him welcome, and us sorry to leave him. Of a Monday, perhaps, our hall is filled with huge trunks coming down, and a great omnibus standing at the gate is being loaded. Many guests are standing to see other guests off, and very often a pleasant little party is broken up and scattered. Then is our host seen flitting about; and he has a pretty little custom of his own which makes those who go think hereafter of the Rose with pleasure. Every departing lady finds on her table a charming bouquet made artistically, in a pretty little silver-looking holder. These little courtesies take off the rude surfaces of bill-paying, and remove the commercial sense of the intimacy. And thus, hereafter, we think very pleasantly of Herr Alten, and his "Rose Hotel," and his "Garten Haus," and gardens and bowers where we had our after-dinner council, and where in the morning the ladies sat and worked.

CHAPTER II. OUR GAMING-HOUSE.

THE pattern of this house of entertainment, where the "game is made," is different from that of other houses. By the law of gaming, two parasites seem always to flourish under its shelter, to be almost necessary, and absolutely to adhere to its sides. These are: first, the "Restoration"—the dinners, suppers, ices, coffees, sorbets, and cognacs, with which a gambling settlement must be supplied, just as a regular city must be with wholesome water; and, secondly, the long ranges of shops and bazaars for jewellery and knick-knacks, whose only claim to public support is that they shall be strictly useless. Here we are sure to find the Frankfort garnets and crystals, the rude brown

Tyrolese carvings, served by the theatrical Tyrolese man and his family, each about as brown and rude as their carvings; the sham young Turk, with his sham Turkish gewgaws made at Lyons, who sits "au sultan," as other sham Turks sit in Regent-street and in the Rue de Rivoli—the old pictures, as raw as if they were done in red clay; and tiny eye-glasses—the "pincenez"—without focus, and only to be used as a coquetish instrument. These are necessary for gambling life; for, as extravagance wins, so extravagance must spend.

The lessons learnt at home about "throwing away money" make the young traveller almost start, as he sees gold and silver tossed about here so recklessly across the Board of Green Cloth. The croupiers seem to him calm and superior beings, with all the finish of complete gentlemen, with a dash of courteous chivalry, instead of mere tradesmen and civil shopkeepers, which many of them are. The players are all Russian noblemen and gallant adventurers, with an air of interest hanging about them, instead of being, as they are, the "double extract" of vagabond rascality and cracked character.

Respectable middle class ladies taking their first glass of spa water on their first travels, become so dazzled and flattered by the cheap courtesies of those who sit next them, so elated with winning a wretched one-and-eightpence for a night or two in succession, that it is almost amusing to watch how they are led on into sitting down formally at the board, and grow into friendly familiarity with the scrubby foreign scamps about them. The simple husband looks on with pride as he notes how admirable are the friendly relations which foreign travel brings about, and how stiffly and stupidly we manage things at home. He, too, in his own department, has staked his dwindled one-and-eightpence, and in a fever of agitation has clutched his prize. He has shown the precious coin to his wife, who should share in all his triumphs. Their rest that night is very sweet, for they have been chuckling over the notion of paying all their expenses with their winnings.

In a few days, however, all is changed; the fatal "run" has come, all the mendicant silver—won with such pains and fluttering of the heart (enough to bring on confirmed palpitation)—has drifted away, with much more. There are anxious looks—sour looks—hostile looks—and ever unpleasant altercation. One had warned the other, had clearly prophesied—do him *that* justice at least—that all this would come to pass. To which it is replied, what was the use of *that* sort of thing now; it was enough to have lost without being *worried*. There is no such test of the true quality of temper as a trifling reverse at this place, and we can fancy a scarlet Mephistopheles standing by with his head decorated with a cock's feather, chuckling.

To stand by and see the wreck of "a system" is one of the most dismal spectacles in the world. The most marvellous thing is that the ship goes to pieces in a few minutes. There is

a stout English gentleman, for instance, in a rich brown wig, and a flowing white waistcoat, who has discovered "a system," and has come to play it. We may suspect that he has been a good deal "knocked about," and has rubbed up against all manner of characters: for he talks in French and German with a fluency that more respectable people do not attain. He has his fixed place on the croupier's right; has a little volume on gaming, beautifully scored in red and black lines, and has, besides, a black crop-haired twinkling-eyed aide-de-camp, whose duty it is to do hurried arithmetic, and lay down the money. Before the chief is to be seen a most inviting and varied pile; two fat rouleaux, three heaps of golden double Fredericks, and three or four heaps of heavy double florins. Every morning he comes, and a gaming menial secures his place for him, according to the formula, by laying a bit of silver on a card, and there he sits from eleven until about two.

The system consists of beginning with a couple of florins. If he win, the same sum and a little more is put down on the other colour; if he lose, double is put down on the first colour. Generally he loses for, say three or four turns, but then all would come right again. The system flourished. People began to talk of the burly Englishman and his system; and it was known that he was winning steadily and surely about forty Napoleons a day. It was hard and severe work, but it was sure, and he was content with small gains.

Once or twice came what fast men pleasantly called "a squeak." Luck seemed to take pleasure in "dodging" him, and, as often as he changed his colour, it perversely changed too. Gradually his arithmetic grew complicated—the arithmetician aide-de-camp had to do large sums, and at last reached five hundred florins, which would be one thousand two hundred and forty or so the next time. It really *did* come to that, and the burly Englishman gasped a little as he staked. But the right colour came up, and he was saved.

It went on for a fortnight, when, one morning I came in just as he has got into one of these crises. It was eight hundred florins. It was two thousand. The aide-de-camp is agitated. The leader is white and red with agitation. He has to visit a private bank in his breast-pocket, and takes out rustling notes of a thousand francs. He loses again. More notes, more losses. He has to abandon the system in confusion. The whole thing is over in ten minutes. The ship goes to pieces—system, numbers, calculations, aide-de-camp, everything is swept under, and in a few seconds more is heard the fatal shriek of the foot of the chair violently pushed back upon the polished floor. The croupiers, who have had infinite trouble during the last fortnight announcing his calculations, grin and chuckle as he goes; but I see their superintendent stamp his foot angrily, and "gronder" them through his teeth! The decencies must be kept up, and we must respect misfortune. The poor burly Englishman and his aide are seen

no more; but this is the old, old, the very *oldest* story.

CHAPTER III. OUR THEATRE.

In the Gaming Place stands the theatre—a great yellow Parthenon-looking building standing by itself, like most theatres in Germany. We may walk round it. The performers have not to skulk down a squalid lane to get to their stage, or to enter by a mean door, nor is the building to which that door gives admittance a grim and dirty house, built for a jail, long before jails were made architectural. This is a bright flashing structure; perhaps not so bright inside as it is outside. It begins its entertainment like a good rational theatre at half-past six, and concludes it at nine. The prices are wonderful; the best places, and which are practically the worst, cost no more than three-and-sixpence, and you can have a numbered pit stall for about a shilling and twopence. Best place of all, however, is a class of seat unknown to us at home—a row of boxes under the regular boxes, and which are a little raised above the heads of those in the pit. These are known as “Parterre-loges,” and cost about one-and-sixpence. For this one-and-sixpence we have had many a pleasant evening, and listened to an inexhaustible variety of operas wonderfully done. If there was a weakness on the stage as to voices, the good orchestra carried all through. But in other points, chorus, scenery, and even ballet, every thing was excellent. For this is the state theatre, and our grand-duke (who is like a German professor, with his spectacles coming so oddly on the top of a uniform) takes a pride in having *his* opera and *his* ballet to show to a stray kinglet or dukelet coming that road. And the orchestra—very large and well crowded, and their music-books all glaring white from shaded lamps—has quite a Grand Opera look.

One night we had the delightful Faust—Faust the New; not poor old-fashioned Faust of Capelmeister Spohr, now for ever exploded. The orchestra played it with delight. Marguerita becoming here “Margot,” came to us as a “Fräulein Peckl”—a name with all the force of a douche as regards romance.

Yet “Fräulein Peckl,” although her hair was of the blackest, and the most abundant black, and although she married M. Gounod’s charming music to profuse “nights” and “ishes,” and although a little gaunt about the shoulders, did wonderfully well, sang with spirit and taste, though, perhaps, scarcely with Italian feeling. In the famous jewel song, so delicate and airy that the touch should be as light as the fluttering of insects (has it been noted with what exquisite effect the intractable accompaniment of cymbals has been introduced into this song?), she did her work with effect. So, too, with “Herr Caffieri,” who played Faust with taste, although at times, when wrestling with some trying high note, he showed a distress that seemed to reach almost to agony. But for the

arch enemy not much can be said, for not much *could* be said for an arch enemy, heavy, lumbering, corpulent, and painfully thick about the throat. He made a grave and thoroughly German business of it, too, going through it conscientiously, and without a particle of the conventional jocularly, shrugs, faces, sneers, which we have been taught to associate with an arch enemy. The scenery—the cathedral and witches scene—ballet and choruses were charming and wonderful for that parterre-loge price.

The next night we looked on the Barbière; the next night at Matilda, a pleasant little opera by an obscure German composer; and on the next night we hurry to the battle-ground of Party, and hear The Flying Dutchman, a very remarkable work of Richard Wagner. To those who love music, and the politics of music, this is a more serious question than could be supposed. There can be no question that his principles, though not officially recognised, have exercised a great influence on the music of the last ten or twelve years. Three operas of Verdi, the Traviata, the Ballo, and his newest, La Forza, all exhibit strong Wagnerian traces. In Meyerbeer’s Dinorah we find some also.

CHAPTER IV. OUR MUSIC AND DANCING.

At times, when the rain is dripping down among the orange-trees and splashing on the lake, all the company drifts into the great ball-room, where the orchestra, perched in a gallery, are to play. Glass doors open out on M. Chevet’s restaurant, and the usual “main” of coffee and ice is turned on. Then comes that exhibition of human selfishness which is always to be reckoned on where the question of chairs arises. Scrape a Tartar, said Napoleon, in the well-frayed saying; but put a foreign lady among chairs while music is playing, and all the earthy part of her nature breaks out. Three are not too many for one, for a book must have a chair as well as a human being, and feet must have *their* chair too. The great room becomes as a gipsy encampment; its spring velvet sofas are loaded with heavy bourgeois men and women, who perhaps cannot afford to sit so comfortably elsewhere; work is brought, a hundred circles are formed, and every one sets himself to be comfortable and happy. Outside, among the orange-trees, hundreds are walking up and down, and the two black swans live sumptuously for an hour or so. Should they ever be sent away to quieter and more innocent ponds, at the sound of music of any quality, they will be sure to hurry to the edge, and expect their banquet.

Wonderful life this for men and women—and the natural question is, who supports these thick-throated, shaven-checked men, whose whole life seems to have no wider circle than the little marble table on which their coffee-cup stands, and whose thoughts do not travel a longer journey than the end of their cigar? Who helps these gentry to eat the bread of idleness in such comfort? As for some of the ladies, they have an “industry” of their own.

How charming the music from the gallery, it helps by two rainy hours so pleasantly. All honour to Hungarian "Kéler Béla," chapel and bandmaster "des Herzogl. Nassauischen II., Infanterie-Regiments," who has transformed his noisy out-door band into a perfect orchestra. Kéler Béla does everything, arranges, beats time, snatches up a clarionet when there is danger, or flies at a violin, and fiddles desperately. All honour to these musicians of all work.

It is like "a breath of the sweet south" when one hears the opening notes of a Strauss walse. Is not this master—for he *is* a master—the Watteau of musicians? He is more like Meissonier, for the canvas on which he paints is very small. We all know the pattern of one of these charming compositions. Better and more acceptable without a formal introduction to embark at once on a soft, sweet, seductive, and half-melancholy air, which winds and flows in curves, without jerks or intervals, near the last finish of which comes a rich swell or protest from the full brass crowd, as who should say, "let us join, do," but who are told, "not yet."

Then repeated, to make us love it a little better and recollect it. Then crash of cymbals and drum, and the crowd, let in, have their own way and rage tumultuously, then disperse and give way again to our soft air, coming in by herself like a pensive white-robed maiden who has lost something, and seeks it mournfully. Then they crowd again, and all go off.

Of Saturday nights, the administration breaks out with hospitality into a ball. The gold and gilding and scarlet and pillars, behind which the company who do not dance sit in files, look brilliant in the light. The orchestra is above in the clouds. There is a perfect prairie of parquet floor, as free an expanse for the true dancer as a pond for the skater; and the former, on the encouragement of Strauss, winding out from above, flies down like an arrow. But there is a famine of gentlemen. A few Austrian officers—with the affection peculiar to that service—walk up and down arm-in-arm, talking as if they were crowding their last private instructions into the few seconds they had to spare before the sailing of the packet. The effect of the promenade would be better, as seen from the benches, if their white coats had been better made. A back view is like one vast wrinkle. But they were, so to speak, out of work; and, as far as dancing went, required a relief fund and a central committee. A little master of ceremonies—very like the Emperor Napoleon in the Punch caricatures—who carries a cocked-hat, and to whom nobody pays the least attention, is quite helpless. In the early part of the evening, he and his cocked-hat are more

considered, for his hands are full of prettily-printed programmes, with a paper tube behind holding a pencil—articles which every one is eager to secure. For the time, therefore, he is in a sort of spurious request, and is sought with importunity, until the selfish wants of the community being all supplied, he sinks of a sudden into mortifying neglect.

Our dances are in sets. Thus we have our cards set out in this wise.

1. Walse.
1. Française (quadrille).
1. Polka.
1. Galop.
1. Polka Mazourka.
2. Walse.
2. Française, &c.

We take our polkas about as fast as a galop, and our galops about as slow as a polka. That exploded dance still reigns, and enjoys a steady popularity, so much so that double the time is given to it that is allowed for the walse or galop. This, English blood resents. For it is too bad, when the great parquet is in possession of but ten couple or so, and Strauss or Gungl is crashing, and we are flying down and flying round, while the hundred moderateurs seem like whirling lighted sticks, and the great lines of sitting ladies to be riding express in a "merry-go-round" about us—I say, at such a moment it is too bad to be brought up violently by a crash, with then an abrupt silence, as though everything had broken down.

Meanwhile business is thriving to the right and left. The dancing brings profit, and gentlemen in white ties fill up the pauses, by going in and scattering a Louis or so at the tables. M. Chevet outside under his glass shedding profits too by the occasion, and his inner temple is filled.

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